



F. P. Dunne.

Greatest Short Stories

VOLUME 4



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MRS. PROTHEROE

BY BOOTH TARKINGTON

MRS. PROTHEROE

BY BOOTH TARKINGTON

WHEN Alonzo Rawson took his seat as the Senator from Stackpole in the upper branch of the General Assembly of the State, an expression of pleasure and of greatness appeared to be permanently imprinted upon his countenance. He felt that if he had not quite arrived at all which he meant to make his own, at least he had emerged upon the arena where he was to win it, and he looked about him for a few other strong spirits with whom to construct a focus of power which should control the Senate. The young man had not long to look, for within a week after the beginning of the session these others showed themselves to his view, rising above the general level of mediocrity and timidity, party leaders and chiefs of factions, men who were on their feet continually, speaking half a dozen times a day, freely and loudly. To these, and that house at large, he felt it necessary to introduce himself by a speech which must prove him one of the elect, and he awaited impatiently an opening.

Alonzo had no timidity himself. He was not one of those who first try their voices on motions

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to adjourn, written in form and handed out to novices by presiding officers and leaders. He was too conscious of his own gifts, and he had been "accustomed to speaking" ever since his days in the Stackpole City Seminary. He was under the impression, also, that his appearance alone would command attention from his colleagues and the gallery. He was tall; his hair was long, with a rich waviness, rippling over both brow and collar, and he had, by years of endeavor, succeeded in molding his features to present an aspect of stern and thoughtful majesty whenever he "spoke."

The opportunity to show his fellows that new greatness was among them was delayed not overlong, and Senator Rawson arose, long and bony in his best clothes, to address the Senate with a huge voice in denunciation of the "Sunday Baseball Bill," then upon second reading. The classical references, which, as a born orator, he felt it necessary to introduce, were received with acclamations which the gavel of the Lieutenant-Governor had no power to still.

"What led to the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire?" he exclaimed. "I await an answer from the advocates of this *de-generate* measure! I *demand* an answer from them! Let me hear from them on *that* subject! Why don't they speak up? They can't give one. Not because they ain't familiar with history—no, sir! That's not the reason! It's because they *daren't*,

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because their answer would have to go on record *against* 'em! Don't any of you try to raise it against me that I ain't speaking to the point, for I tell you that when you encourage Sunday Baseball, or any kind of Sabbath-breakin' on Sunday you're tryin' to start the State on the downward path that beset Rome! *I'll* tell you what ruined it. The Roman Empire started out to be the greatest nation on earth, and they had a good start, too, just like the United States has got to-day. Then what happened to 'em? Why, them old ancient fellers got more interested in athletic games and gladiatorial combats and racing and all kinds of outdoor sports, and bettin' on 'em, than they were in oratory, or literature, or charitable institutions and good works of all kinds. At first they were moderate and the country was prosperous. But six days in the week wouldn't content 'em, and they went at it all the time, so that at last they gave up the seventh day to their sports, the way this bill wants *us* to do, and from that time on the result was *de*-generacy and *de*-gradation! You better remember *that* lesson, my friends, and don't try to sink this State to the level of Rome!"

When Alonzo Rawson wiped his dampened brow, and dropped into his chair, he was satisfied to the core of his heart with the effect of his maiden effort. There was not one eye in the place that was not fixed upon him and shining with surprise and delight, while the kindly Lieu-

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tenant-Governor, his face very red, rapped for order. The young Senator across the aisle leaned over and shook Alonzo's hand excitedly.

"That was beautiful, Senator Rawson!" he whispered. "I'm *for* the bill, but I can respect a masterly opponent."

"I thank you, Senator Truslow," Alonzo returned graciously. "I am glad to have your good opinion, Senator."

"You have it, Senator," said Truslow enthusiastically. "I hope you intend to speak often."

"I do, Senator. I intend to make myself heard," the other answered gravely, "upon all questions of moment."

"You will fill a great place among us, Senator!"

Then Alonzo Rawson wondered if he had not underestimated his neighbor across the aisle; he had formed an opinion of Truslow as one of small account and no power, for he had observed that, although this was Truslow's second term, he had not once demanded recognition nor attempted to take part in a debate. Instead, he seemed to spend most of his time frittering over some desk work, though now and then he walked up and down the aisles talking in a low voice to various Senators. How such a man could have been elected at all, Alonzo failed to understand. Also, Truslow was physically inconsequent, in his colleague's estimation—"a little, insignificant, dudish kind of a man," he had

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thought; one whom he would have darkly suspected of cigarettes had he not been dumfounded to behold Truslow smoking an old black pipe in the lobby. The Senator from Stackpole had looked over the other's clothes with a disapproval that amounted to bitterness. Truslow's attire reminded him of pictures in New York magazines, or the dress of boys newly home from college, he didn't know which, but he did know that it was contemptible. Consequently, after receiving the young man's congratulations, Alonzo was conscious of the keenest surprise at his own feeling that there might be something in him after all.

He decided to look him over again, more carefully to take the measure of one who had shown himself so frankly an admirer. Waiting, therefore, a few moments until he felt sure that Truslow's gaze had ceased to rest upon himself, he turned to bend a surreptitious but piercing scrutiny upon his neighbor. His glance, however, sweeping across Truslow's shoulder toward the face, suddenly encountered another pair of eyes beyond, so intently fixed upon himself that he started. The clash was like two searchlights meeting—and the glorious brown eyes that shot into Alonzo's were not the eyes of Truslow.

Truslow's desk was upon the outer aisle, and along the wall were placed comfortable leather chairs and settees, originally intended for the use of members of the upper house, but nearly

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always occupied by their wives and daughters, or "lady-lobbyists," or other women spectators.

Leaning back with extraordinary grace, in the chair nearest Truslow, sat the handsomest woman Alonzo had ever seen in his life. Her long coat of soft gray fur was unrecognizable to him in connection with any familiar breed of squirrel; her broad flat hat of the same fur was wound with a gray veil, underneath which her heavy brown hair seemed to exhale a mysterious glow, and never, not even in a lithograph, had he seen features so regular or a skin so clear! And to look into her eyes seemed to Alonzo like diving deep into clear water and turning to stare up at the light.

His own eyes fell first. In the breathless awkwardness that beset him they seemed to stumble shamefully down to his desk, like a country boy getting back to his seat after a thrashing on the teacher's platform. For the lady's gaze, profoundly liquid as it was, had not been friendly.

Alonzo Rawson had neither the habit of petty analysis, nor the inclination toward it; yet there arose within him a wonder at his own emotion, at its strangeness and the violent reaction of it. A moment ago his soul had been steeped in satisfaction over the figure he had cut with his speech and the extreme enthusiasm which had been accorded it—an extraordinarily pleasant feeling: suddenly this was gone, and in its place he found

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himself almost choking with a dazed sense of having been scathed, and at the same time understood in a way in which he did not understand himself. And yet—he and this most unusual lady had been so mutually conscious of each other in their mysterious interchange that he felt almost acquainted with her. Why, then, should his head be hot with resentment? Nobody had *said* anything to him!

He seized upon the fattest of the expensive books supplied to him by the State, opened it with emphasis and began not to read it, with abysmal abstraction, tinglingly alert to the circumstance that Truslow was holding a low-toned but lively conversation with the unknown. Her laugh came to him, at once musical, quiet, and of a quality which irritated him into saying bitterly to himself that he guessed there was just as much refinement in Stackpole as there was in the Capital City, and just as many old families! The clerk calling his vote upon the "Baseball Bill" at that moment, he roared "No!" in a tone which was profane. It seemed to him that he was avenging himself upon somebody for something and it gave him a great deal of satisfaction.

He returned immediately to his imitation of Archimedes, only relaxing the intensity of his attention to the text (which blurred into jargon before his fixed gaze) when he heard that light laugh again. He pursed his lips, looked up at

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the ceiling as if slightly puzzled by some profound question beyond the reach of womankind; solved it almost immediately, and, setting his hand to pen and paper, wrote the capital letter "O" several hundred times on note paper furnished by the State. So oblivious was he, apparently, to everything but the question of statecraft which occupied him that he did not even look up when the morning's session was adjourned and the law-makers began to pass noisily out, until Truslow stretched an arm across the aisle and touched him upon the shoulder.

"In a moment, Senator!" answered Alonzo in his deepest chest tones. He made it a very short moment, in deed, for he had a wild, breath-taking suspicion of what was coming.

"I want you to meet Mrs. Protheroe, Senator," said Truslow, rising, as Rawson, after folding his writings with infinite care, placed them in his breast pocket.

"I am pleased to make your acquaintance, ma'am," Alonzo said in a loud, firm voice, as he got to his feet, though the place grew vague about him when the lady stretched a charming, slender, gloved hand to him across Truslow's desk. He gave it several solemn shakes.

"We shouldn't have disturbed you, perhaps?" she asked, smiling radiantly upon him. "You were at some important work, I'm afraid."

He met her eyes again, and their beauty and the thoughtful kindness of them fairly took his

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breath. "I am the chairman, ma'am," he replied, swallowing, "of the committee on drains and dikes."

"I knew it was something of great moment," she said gravely, "but I was anxious to tell you that I was interested in your speech."

A few minutes later, without knowing how he had got his hat and coat from the cloak-room, Alonzo Rawson found himself walking slowly through the marble vistas of the State-house to the great outer doors with the lady and Truslow. They were talking inconsequently of the weather, and of various legislators, but Alonzo did not know it. He vaguely formed replies to her questions, and he hardly realized what the questions were; he was too stirringly conscious of the rich quiet of her voice and of the caress of the gray fur of her cloak when the back of his hand touched it—rather accidentally—now and then, as they moved on together.

It was a cold, quick air to which they emerged, and Alonzo, daring to look at her, found that she had pulled the veil down over her face, the color of which, in the keen wind, was like that of June roses seen through morning mists. At the curb a long, low, rakish black automobile was in waiting, the driver a mere indistinguishable cylinder of fur.

Truslow, opening the little door of the tonneau, offered his hand to the lady. "Come over to the club, Senator, and lunch with me," he said.

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"Mrs. Protheroe won't mind dropping us there on her way."

That was an eerie ride for Alonzo, whose feet were falling upon strange places. His pulses jumped and his eyes swam with tears of unlawful speed, but his big ungloved hand tingled not with the cold so much as with the touch of that divine gray fur upon his little finger.

"You intend to make many speeches, Mr. Truslow tells me," he heard the rich voice saying.

"Yes, ma'am," he summoned himself to answer. "I expect I will. Yes, ma'am." He paused, and then repeated, "Yes, ma'am."

She looked at him for a moment. "But you will do some work, too, won't you?" she asked slowly.

Her intention in this passed by Alonzo at the time. "Yes, ma'am," he answered. "The committee work interests me greatly, especially drains and dikes."

"I have heard," she said, as if searching his opinion, "that almost as much is accomplished in the committee-rooms as on the floor? There—and in the lobby and in the hotels and clubs?"

"I don't have much to do with that!" he returned quickly. "I guess none of them lobbyists will get much out of me! I even sent back all their railroad tickets. They needn't come near me!"

After a pause which she may have filled with unexpressed admiration, she ventured, almost

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timidly: "Do you remember that it was said that Napoleon once attributed the secret of his power over other men to one quality?"

"I am an admirer of Napoleon," returned the Senator from Stackpole. "I admire all great men."

"He said that he held men by his reserve."

"It can be done," observed Alonzo, and stopped, feeling that it was more reserved to add nothing to the sentence.

"But I suppose that such a policy," she smiled upon him inquiringly, "wouldn't have helped him much with women?"

"No," he agreed immediately. "My opinion is that a man ought to tell a *good* woman everything. What is more sacred than—"

The car, turning a corner much too quickly, performed a gymnastic squirm about an unexpected street-car and the speech ended in a gasp, as Alonzo, not of his own volition, half rose and pressed his cheek closely against hers. Instantaneous as it was, his heart leaped violently, but not with fear. Could all the things of his life that had seemed beautiful have been compressed into one instant it would not have brought him even the suggestion of the wild shock of joy of that one, wherein he knew the glamorous perfume of Mrs. Protheroe's brown hair and felt her cold cheek firm against his, with only the gray veil between.

"I'm afraid this driver of mine will kill me

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some day," she said, laughing and composedly straightening her hat. "Do you care for big machines?"

"Yes, ma'am," he answered huskily. "I haven't been in many."

"Then I'll take you again," said Mrs. Protheroe. "If you like I'll come down to the State-house and take you out for a run in the country."

"When?" said the lost young man, staring at her with his mouth open. "When?"

"Saturday afternoon if you like. I'll be there at two."

They were in front of the club and Truslow had already jumped out. Mrs. Protheroe gave him her hand and they exchanged a glance significant of something more than a friendly good-by. Indeed, one might have hazarded that there was something almost businesslike about it. The confused Senator from Stackpole, climbing out reluctantly, observed it not, nor could he have understood, even if he had seen, that delicate signal which passed between his two companions.

When he was upon the ground, Mrs. Protheroe extended her hand without speaking, but her lips formed the word "Saturday." Then she was carried away quickly, while Alonzo, his heart hammering, stood looking after her, born into a strange world, the touch of the gray fur upon his little finger, the odor of her hair faintly about him, one side of his face red, the other pale.

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"To-day is Wednesday," he said, half aloud.

"Come on, Senator." Truslow took his arm and turned him toward the club doors.

The other looked upon his new friend vaguely. "Why, I forgot to thank her for the ride," he said.

"You'll have other chances, Senator," Truslow assured him. Mrs. Protheroe has a hobby for studying politics and she expects to come down often. She has plenty of time—she's a widow, you know."

"I hope you didn't think," exclaimed Alonzo indignantly, "that I thought she was a married woman!"

After lunch they walked back to the State-house together, Truslow regarding his thoughtful companion with sidelong whimsicalness. Mrs. Protheroe's question, suggestive of a difference between work and speechmaking, had recurred to Alonzo, and he had determined to make himself felt, off the floor as well as upon it. He set to this with a fine energy that afternoon in his committee-room, and the Senator from Stackpole knew his subject. On drains and dikes he had no equal. He spoke convincingly to his colleagues of the committee upon every bill that was before them, and he compelled their humblest respect. He went earnestly at it, indeed, and sat very late that night in his room at a nearby boarding-house, studying bills, trying to keep his mind upon them and not to think of his

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strange morning and of Saturday. Finally his neighbor in the next room, Senator Ezra Trumbull, long abed, was awakened by his praying and groaned slightly. Trumbull meant to speak to Rawson about his prayers, for Trumbull was an early one to bed and they woke him every night. The partition was flimsy and Alonzo addressed his Maker in the loud voice of those accustomed to talking across wide out-of-door spaces. Trumbull considered it especially unnecessary in the city; though, as a citizen of a county which loved but little his neighbor's district, he felt that in Stackpole there was good reason for a person to shout his prayers at the top of his voice and even then have small chance to carry through the distance. Still, it was a delicate matter to mention, and he put it off from day to day.

Thursday passed slowly for Alonzo Rawson, nor was his voice lifted in debate. There was little but routine: and the main interest of the chamber was in the lobbying that was being done upon the "Sunday Baseball Bill," which had passed to its third reading and would come up for final disposition within a fortnight. This was the measure which Alonzo had set his heart upon defeating. It was a simple enough bill: it provided, in substance, that baseball might be played on Sunday by professionals in the State capital, which was proud of its league team. Naturally, it was denounced by clergymen, and

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deputations of ministers and committees from women's religious societies were constantly arriving at the State-house to protest against its passage. The Senator from Stackpole reassured all of these with whom he talked, and was one of their staunchest allies and supporters. He was active in leading the wavering among his colleagues, or even the inimical, out to meet and face the deputations. It was in this occupation that he was engaged, on Friday afternoon, when he received a shock.

A committee of women from a church society was waiting in the corridor, and he had rounded up a reluctant half-dozen senators and led them forth to be interrogated as to their intentions regarding the bill. The committee and the lawmakers soon distributed themselves into little argumentative clumps, and Alonzo found himself in the centre of these, with one of the ladies who had unfortunately—but, in her enthusiasm, without misgivings—begun a reproachful appeal to an advocate of the bill whose name was Goldstein.

"Senator Goldstein," she exclaimed, "I could not believe it when I heard that you were in favor of this measure! I have heard my husband speak in the highest terms of your old father. May I ask you what *he* thinks of it? If you voted for the desecration of Sunday by a low baseball game, could you dare go home and face that good old man?"

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"Yes, madam," said Goldstein mildly; "we are *both* Jews."

A low laugh rippled out from near-by, and Alonzo, turning almost violently, beheld his lady of the furs. She was leaning back against a broad pilaster, her hands sweeping the same big coat behind her, her face turned toward him, but her eyes, sparkingly delighted, resting upon Goldstein.

Under the broad fur hat she made a picture as engaging, to Alonzo Rawson, as it was bewitching. She appeared not to see him, to be quite unconscious of him—and he believed it. Truslow and five or six members of both houses were about her, and they all seemed to be bending eagerly toward her. Alonzo was furious with her.

Her laugh lingered upon the air for a moment, then her glance swept round the other way, omitting the Senator from Stackpole, who, immediately putting into practice a reserve which would have astonished Napoleon, swung about and quitted the deputation without a word of farewell or explanation. He turned into the cloak-room and paced the floor for three minutes with a malevolence which awed the colored attendants into not brushing his coat; but, when he returned to the corridor, cautious inquiries addressed to the tobacconist elicited the information that the handsome lady with Senator Truslow had departed.

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Truslow himself had not gone. He was lounging in his seat when Alonzo returned and was genially talkative. The latter refrained from replying in kind, not altogether out of reserve, but more because of a dim suspicion (which rose within him the third time Truslow called him "Senator" in one sentence) that his first opinion of the young man as a light-minded person might have been correct.

There was no session the following afternoon, but Alonzo watched the street from the windows of his committee-room, which overlooked the splendid breadth of stone steps leading down from the great doors to the pavement. There were some big bookcases in the room, whose glass doors served as mirrors in which he more and more sternly regarded the soft image of an entirely new gray satin tie, while the conviction grew within him that (arguing from her behavior of the previous day) she would not come, and that the Stackpole girls were nobler by far at heart than many who might wear a king's-ransom's-worth of jewels round their throats at the opera-house in a large city. This sentiment was heartily confirmed by the clock when it marked half-past two. He faced the bookcase doors and struck his breast, his open hand falling across the gray tie with tragic violence; after which, turning for the last time to the windows, he uttered a loud exclamation and, laying hands upon an ulster and a gray felt hat, each as new

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as the satin tie, ran hurriedly from the room. The black automobile was waiting.

"I thought it possible you might see me from a window," said Mrs. Protheroe as he opened the little door.

"I was just coming out," he returned, gasping for breath. "I thought—from yesterday—you'd probably forgotten."

"Why 'from yesterday'?" she asked.

"I thought—I thought—" He faltered to a stop as the full glorious sense of her presence overcame him. She wore the same veil.

"You thought I did not see you yesterday in the corridor?"

"I thought you might have acted more—more—"

"More cordially?"

"Well, he said, looking down at his hands, "more like you knew we'd been introduced."

At that she sat silent, looking away from him, and he, daring a quick glance at her, found that he might let his eyes remain upon her face. That was a dangerous place for eyes to rest, yet Alonzo Rawson was anxious for the risk. The car flew along the even asphalt on its way to the country like a wild goose on a long slant of wind, and, with his foolish fury melted inexplicably into honey, Alonzo looked at her—and looked at her—till he would have given an arm for another quick corner and a street-car to send his cheek against that veiled, cold cheek of hers again. It

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was not until they reached the alternate vacant lots and bleak Queen Anne cottages of the city's ragged edge that she broke the silence.

"You were talking to some one else," she said almost inaudibly.

"Yes, ma'am, Goldstein, but—"

"Oh, no!" She turned toward him, lifting her hand. "You were quite the lion among ladies."

"I don't know what you mean, Mrs. Protheroe," he said, truthfully.

"What were you talking to all those women about?"

"It was about the 'Sunday Baseball Bill.'"

"Ah! The bill you attacked in your speech last Wednesday?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I hear you haven't made any speeches since then," she said indifferently.

"No, ma'am," he answered gently. "I kind of got the idea that I'd better lay low for a while, at first, and get in some quiet, hard work."

"I understand. You are a man of intensely reserved nature."

"With men," said Alonzo, "I am. With ladies I am not so much so. I think a good woman ought to be told—"

"But you are interested," she interrupted, "in defeating that bill?"

"Yes, ma'am," he returned. "It is an iniquitous measure."

"Why?"

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"Mrs. Protheroe!" he exclaimed, taken aback. "I thought all the ladies were against it. My own mother wrote to me from Stackpole that she'd rather see me in my grave than votin' for such a bill, and I'd rather see myself there!"

"But are you sure that you understand it?"

"I only know it desecrates the Sabbath. That's enough for me!"

She leaned toward him and his breath came quickly.

"No. You're wrong," she said, and rested the tips of her fingers upon his sleeve.

"I don't understand why—why you say that," he faltered. "It sounds kind of—surprising to me—"

"Listen," she said. Perhaps Mr. Truslow told you that I am studying such things. I do not want to be an idle woman; I want to be of use to the world, even if it must be only in small ways."

"I think that is a noble ambition!" he exclaimed. "I think all good women ought—"

"Wait," she interrupted gently. "Now, that bill is a worthy one, though it astonishes you to hear me say so. Perhaps you don't understand the conditions. Sunday is the laboring man's only day of recreation—and what recreation is he offered?"

"He ought to go to church," said Alonzo promptly.

"But the fact is that he doesn't—not often—not at *all* in the afternoon. Wouldn't it be well

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to give him some wholesome way of employing his Sunday afternoons? This bill provides for just that, and it keeps him away from drinking, too, for it forbids the sale of liquor on the grounds.”

“Yes, I know,” said Alonzo plaintively. “But it ain’t *right*! I was raised to respect the Sabbath and—”

“Ah, that’s what you should do! You think *I* could believe in anything that wouldn’t make it better and more sacred?”

“Oh, no, ma’am!” he cried reproachfully. “It’s only that I don’t see—”

“I am telling you.” She lifted her veil and let him have the full dazzle of her beauty. “Do you know that many thousands of laboring people spend their Sundays drinking and carousing about the low country road-houses because the game is played at such places on Sunday? They go there because they never get a chance to see it played in the city. And don’t you understand that there would be no Sunday liquor trade, no workingmen poisoning themselves every seventh day in the low groggeries, as hundreds of them do now, if they had something to see that would interest them?—something as wholesome and fine as this sport would be, under the conditions of this bill; something to keep them in the open air, something to bring a little gayety into their dull lives!” Her voice had grown louder and it shook a little, with a rising emotion, though its

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sweetness was only the more poignant. "Oh, my dear Senator, she cried, "don't you *see* how wrong you are? Don't you want to *help* these poor people?"

Her fingers, which had tightened upon his sleeve, relaxed and she leaned back, pulling the veil down over her face as if wishing to conceal from him that her lips trembled slightly; then resting her arm upon the leather cushions, she turned her head away from him, staring fixedly into the gaunt beech woods lining the country road along which they were now coursing. For a time she heard nothing from him, and the only sound was the monotonous chug of the machine.

"I suppose you think it rather shocking to hear a woman talking practically of such commonplace things," she said at last, in a cold voice, just loud enough to be heard.

"No, ma'am," he said huskily.

"Then what *do* you think?" she cried, turning toward him again with a quick, imperious gesture.

"I think I'd better go back to Stackpole," he answered very slowly, "and resign my job. I don't see as I've got any business in the Legislature."

"I don't understand you."

He shook his head mournfully. "It's a simple enough matter. I've studied out a good many bills and talked 'em over and I've picked up some influence and—"

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"I know you have," she interrupted eagerly. "Mr. Truslow says that the members of your drains-and-dikes committee follow your vote on every bill."

"Yes, ma'am," said Alonzo Rawson meekly, "but I expect they oughtn't to. I've had a lesson this afternoon."

"You mean to say—"

"I mean that I didn't know what I was doing about that baseball bill. I was just pig-headedly goin' ahead against it, not knowing nothing about the conditions, and it took a lady to show me what they were. I would have done a wrong thing if you hadn't stopped me."

"You mean," she cried, her splendid eyes widening with excitement and delight; "you mean that you—that you—"

"I mean that I will vote for the bill!" He struck his clinched fist upon his knee. "I come to the Legislature to do *right*!"

"You will, ah, you *will* do right in this!" Mrs. Protheroe thrust up her veil again and her face was flushed and radiant with triumph. "And you'll work, and you'll make a speech for the bill?"

At this the righteous exaltation began rather abruptly to simmer down in the soul of Alonzo Rawson. He saw the consequences of too violently reversing, and knew how difficult they might be to face.

"Well, not—not exactly," he said weakly. "I

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expect our best plan would be for me to lay kind of low and not say any more about the bill at all. Of course, I'll quit workin' against it; and on the roll-call I'll edge close up to the clerk and say 'Aye' so that only him'll hear me. That's done every day—and I—well, I don't just exactly like to come out too publicly for it, after my speech and all I've done against it."

She looked at him sharply for a short second, and then offered him her hand and said: "Let's shake hands *now* on the vote. Think what a triumph it is for me to know that I helped to show you the right."

"Yes, ma'am," he answered confusedly, too much occupied with shaking her hand to know what he said. She spoke one word in an undertone to the driver and the machine took the very shortest way back to the city.

After this excursion several days passed before Mrs. Protheroe came to the State-house again. Rawson was bending over the desk of Senator Josephus Battle, the white-bearded leader of the opposition to the "Sunday Baseball Bill," and was explaining to him the intricacies of a certain drainage measure, when Battle, whose attention had wandered, plucked his sleeve and whispered:

"If you want to see a mighty pretty woman that's doin' no good here, look behind you, over there in the chair by the big fireplace at the back of the room."

Alonzo looked.

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It was she whose counterpart had been in his dream's eye every moment of the dragging days which had been vacant of her living presence. A number of his colleagues were hanging over her almost idiotically; her face was gay and her voice came to his ears, as he turned, with the accent of her cadenced laughter running through her talk like a chime of tiny bells flitting through a strain of music.

"This is the third time she's been here," said Battle, rubbing his beard the wrong way. "She's lobbyin' for that infernal Sabbath-Desecration bill, but we'll beat her, my son."

"Have you made her acquaintance, Senator?" asked Alonzo stiffly.

"No, sir, and I don't want to. But I knew her father—the slickest old beat and the smoothest talker that ever waltzed up the pike. She married rich; her husband left her a lot of real estate around here, but she spends most of her time away. Whatever struck her to come down and lobby for that bill I don't know—yet—but I will! Truslow's helping her to help himself; he's got stock in the company that runs the baseball team, but what she's up to—well, I'll bet there's a nigger in the woodpile *somewhere*!"

"I expect there's a lot of talk like that!" said Alonzo, red with anger, and taking up his papers abruptly.

"Yes, *sir*!" said Battle emphatically, utterly misunderstanding the other's tone and manner.

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"Don't you worry, my son. We'll kill that venomous bill right here in this chamber! We'll kill it so dead that it won't make one flop after the axe hits it. You and me and some others'll tend to *that*! Let her work that pretty face and those eyes of hers all she wants to! I'm keepin' a little lookout, too—and I'll—"

He broke off, for the angry and perturbed Alonzo had left him and gone to his own desk. Battle, slightly surprised, rubbed his beard the wrong way and sauntered out to the lobby to muse over a cigar. Alonzo, loathing Battle with a great loathing, formed bitter phrases concerning that vicious-minded old gentleman, while for a moment he affected to be setting his desk in order. Then he walked slowly up the aisle, conscious of a roaring in his ears (though not aware how red they were) as he approached the semi-circle about her.

He paused within three feet of her in a sudden panic of timidity, and then, to his consternation, she looked him squarely in the face, over the shoulders of two of the group, and the only sign of recognition that she exhibited was a slight frown of unmistakable repulsion, which appeared between her handsome eyebrows.

It was very swift; only Alonzo saw it; the others had no eyes for anything but her, and were not aware of his presence behind them, for she did not even pause in what she was saying.

Alonzo walked slowly away with the worm-

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wood in his heart. He had not grown up among the young people of Stackpole without similar experiences, but it had been his youthful boast that no girl had ever "stopped speaking" to him without reason, or "cut a dance" with him and afterward found opportunity to repeat the indignity.

"What have I *done* to *her*?" was perhaps the hottest cry of his bruised soul, for the mystery was as great as the sting of it.

It was no balm upon that sting to see her pass him at the top of the outer steps, half an hour later, on the arm of that one of his colleagues who had been called the "best-dressed man in the Legislature." She swept by him without a sign, laughing that same laugh at some sally of her escort, and they got into the black automobile together and were whirled away and out of sight by the impassive bundle of furs who manipulated the wheel.

For the rest of that afternoon and the whole of that night no man, woman, or child heard the voice of Alonzo Rawson, for he spoke to none. He came not to the evening meal, nor was he seen by any who had his acquaintance. He entered his room at about midnight, and Trumbull was awakened by his neighbor's overturning a chair. No match was struck, however, and Trumbull was relieved to think that the Senator from Stackpole intended going directly to bed without troubling to light the gas, and that his prayers

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would soon be over. Such was not the case, for no other sound came from the room, nor were Alonzo's prayers uttered that night, though the unhappy statesman in the next apartment could not get to sleep for several hours on account of his nervous expectancy of them.

After this, as the day approached upon which hung the fate of the bill which Mr. Josephus Battle was fighting, Mrs. Protheroe came to the Senate Chamber nearly every morning and afternoon. Not once did she appear to be conscious of Alonzo Rawson's presence, nor once did he allow his eyes to delay upon her, though it can not be truthfully said that he did not always know when she came, when she left, and with whom she stood or sat or talked. He evaded all mention or discussion of the bill or of Mrs. Protheroe; avoided Truslow (who, strangely enough, was avoiding *him*) and, spending upon drains and dikes all the energy that he could manage to concentrate, burned the midnight oil and rubbed salt into his wounds to such marked effect that by the evening of the Governor's Reception—upon the morning following which the mooted bill was to come up—he offered an impression so haggard and worn than an actor might have studied him for a make-up as a young statesman going into a decline.

Nevertheless he dressed with great care and bitterness, and paced the fragrant blossom of a geranium—taken from a plant belonging to his

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landlady—in the lapel of his long coat before he set out.

And yet, when he came down the Governor's broad stairs, and wandered through the big rooms, with the glare of lights above him and the shouting of the guests ringing in his ears, a sense of emptiness beset him; the crowded place seemed vacant and without meaning. Even the noise sounded hollow and remote—and why had he bothered about the geranium? He hated her and would never look at her again—but why was she not there?

By and by, he found himself standing against a wall, where he had been pushed by the press of people.

He was wondering drearily what he was to do with a clean plate and a napkin which a courteous negro had handed him, half an hour earlier, when he felt a quick jerk at his sleeve. It was Truslow, who had worked his way along the wall, and who now, standing on tiptoe, spoke rapidly but cautiously, close to his ear.

"Senator, be quick," he said sharply, at the same time alert to see that they were unobserved. "Mrs. Protheroe wants to speak to you at once. You'll find her near the big palms under the stairway in the hall."

He was gone—he had wormed his way half across the room—before the other, in his simple amazement, could answer. When Alonzo at last found a word, it was only a monosyllable, which,

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with his accompanying action, left a matron of years, who was at that moment being pressed fondly to his side, in a state of mind almost as dumfounded as his own. "*Here!*" was all he said as he pressed the plate and napkin into her hand and departed forcibly for the hall, leaving a spectacular wreckage of trains behind him.

The upward flight of the stairway left a space underneath, upon which, as it was screened (save for a narrow entrance) by a thicket of palms, the crowd had not encroached. Here were placed a divan and a couple of chairs; there was shade from the glare of gas, and the light was dim and cool. Mrs. Protheroe had risen from the divan when Alonzo entered this grotto, and stood waiting for him.

He stopped in the green entrance-way with a quick exclamation.

She did not seem the same woman who had put such slights upon him, this tall, white vision of silk, with the summery scarf falling from her shoulders. His great wrath melted at the sight of her; the pain of his racked pride, which had been so hot in his breast, gave way to a species of fear. She seemed not a human being, but a white spirit of beauty and goodness who stood before him, extending two fine arms to him in long, white gloves.

She left him to his trance for a moment, then seized both his hands in hers and cried to him in

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her rapturous, low voice: "Ah, Senator, you have come! I *knew* you understood!"

"Yes ma'am," he whispered chokily.

She drew him to one of the chairs and sank gracefully down upon the divan near him.

"Mr. Truslow was so afraid you wouldn't," she went on rapidly, "but I was sure. You see I didn't want anybody to suspect that I had any influence with you. I didn't want them to know, even, that I'd talked to you. It all came to me after the first day that we met. You see I've believed in you, in your power and in your reserve, from the first. I want all that you do to seem to come from yourself and not from me or any one else. Oh, I *believe* in great, strong men who stand upon their own feet and conquer the world for themselves! That's *your* way, Senator Rawson. So, you see, as they think I'm lobbying for the bill, I wanted them to believe that your speech for it to-morrow comes from your own great, strong mind and heart and your sense of right, and not from any suggestion of mine."

"My speech!" he stammered.

"Oh, I know," she cried; "I know you think I don't believe much in speeches, and I don't ordinarily, but a few simple, straightforward and vigorous words from you, to-morrow, may carry the bill through. You've made such *progress*, you've been so *reserved*, that you'll carry great weight—and there are three votes of the drains-and-dikes that are against us now, but will fol-

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low yours absolutely. Do you think I would have 'cut' *you* if it hadn't been *best*?"

"But I—"

"Oh, I know you didn't actually promise me to speak, that day. But I knew you would when the time came! I knew that a man of power goes over *all* obstacles, once his sense of *right* is aroused! I *knew*—I never doubted it, that once *you* felt a thing to be right you would strike for it, with all your great strength—at all costs—at all—"

"I can't—I—I—can't!" he whispered nervously. "Don't you see—don't you see—I—"

She leaned toward him, lifting her face close to his. She was so near him that the faint odor of her hair came to him again, and once more the unfortunate Senator from Stackpole risked a meeting of his eyes with hers, and saw the light shining far down in their depths.

At this moment the shadow of a portly man who was stroking his beard the wrong way projected itself upon them from the narrow, green entrance to the grotto. Neither of them perceived it.

Senator Josephus Battle passed on, but when Alonzo Rawson emerged, a few moments later, he was pledged to utter a few simple, straightforward, and vigorous words in favor of the bill. And—let the shame fall upon the head of the scribe who tells it—he had kissed Mrs. Protheroe!

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The fight upon the "Sunday Baseball Bill" the next morning was the warmest of that part of the session, though for a while the reporters were disappointed. They were waiting for Senator Battle, who was famous among them for the vituperative vigor of his attacks and for the kind of personalities which made valuable copy. And yet, until the debate was almost over, he contented himself with going quietly up and down the aisles, whispering to the occupants of the desks, and writing and sending a multitude of notes to his colleagues. Meanwhile, the orators upon both sides harangued their fellows, the lobby, the unpolitical audience, and the patient presiding officer to no effect, so far as votes went. The general impression was that it would be close.

Alonzo Rawson sat bent over his desk, his eyes fixed with gentle steadiness upon Mrs. Protheroe, who occupied the chair wherein he had first seen her. A senator of the opposition was finishing his denunciation, when she turned and nodded almost imperceptibly to the young man.

He gave her one last look of pathetic tenderness and rose.

"The Senator from Stackpole!"

"I want," Alonzo began, in his big voice—"I want to say a few simple, straightforward but vigorous words about this bill. You may remember I spoke against it on its second reading—"

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"You did *that!*" shouted Senator Battle suddenly.

"I want to say now," the Senator from Stackpole continued, "that at that time I hadn't studied the subject sufficiently. "I didn't know the conditions of the case, nor the facts, but since then a great light has broke in upon me—"

"I should say it had! I saw it break!" was Senator Battle's second violent interruption.

When order was restored, Alonzo, who had become very pale, summoned his voice again. "I think we'd ought to take into consideration that Sunday is the working-man's only day of recreation and not drive him into low groggeries, but give him a chance in the open air to indulge his love of wholesome sport—"

"Such as the ancient Romans enjoyed!" interposed Battle vindictively.

"No, sir!" Alonzo wheeled upon him, stung to the quick. "Such a sport as free-born Americans and *only* free-born Americans can play in this wide world,—the American game of baseball, in which no other nation of the *Earth* is our equal!"

This was a point scored and the cheering lasted two minutes. Then the orator resumed:

"I say: 'Give the working-man a chance!' Is his life a happy one? You know it ain't! Give him his one day. *Don't* spoil it for him with your laws—he's only got one! I'm not goin' to take up any more of your time, but if there's anybody

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here who thinks my well-considered opinion worth following I say: '*Vote for this bill.*' It is right and virtuous and ennobling, and it ought to be passed! I say: '*Vote for it.*'"

The reporters decided that the Senator from Stackpole had "wakened things up." The gavel rapped a long time before the chamber quieted down, and when it did, Josephus Battle was on his feet and had obtained the recognition of the chair.

"I wish to say, right here," he began, with a rasping leisureliness, "that I hope no member of this honored body will take my remarks as personal or unparliamentary—but"—he raised a big forefinger and shook it with menace at the presiding officer at the same time suddenly lifting his voice to an unprintable shriek—"I say to *you*, sir, that the song of the siren has been *heard* in the land, and the call of Delilah has been answered! When the Senator from Stackpole rose in his chamber, less than three weeks ago, and denounced this iniquitous measure, I heard him with pleasure—we *all* heard him with pleasure—and respect! In spite of his youth and the poor quality of his expression, *we* listened to him. *We* knew he was sincere! What has caused the change in him? What *has*, I ask? I shall not tell you, upon this floor, but I've taken mighty good care to let most of you know, during the morning, either by word of mouth or by *note* of hand! Especially those of you of the drains-and-

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dikes and others who might follow this young Samson, whose locks have been shore! *I've* told you all about that, and more—*I've* told you the *inside* history of some *facts* about the bill that I will not make public, because I am too confident of our strength to defeat this devilish measure, and prefer to let our vote speak our opinion of it! Let me not detain you longer. *I* thank you!"

Long before he had finished, the Senator from Stackpole was being held down in his chair by Truslow and several senators whose seats were adjacent; and the vote was taken amid an uproar of shouting and confusion. When the clerk managed to proclaim the result over all other noises, the bill was shown to be defeated and "killed," by a majority of five votes.

A few minutes later, Alonzo Rawson, his neckwear disordered and his face white with rage, stumbled out of the great doors upon the trail of Battle, who had quietly hurried away to his hotel for lunch as soon as he had voted.

The black automobile was vanishing round a corner. Truslow stood upon the edge of the pavement staring after it ruefully:

"Where is Mrs. Protheroe?" gasped the Senator from Stackpole.

"She's gone," said the other.

"Gone where?"

"Gone back to Paris. She sails day after tomorrow. She just had time enough to catch her train for New York after waiting to hear how

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the vote went. She told me to tell you good-by, and that she was sorry. Don't stare at me, Rawson! I guess we're in the same boat!— Where are you going?" he finished abruptly.

Alonzo swung by him and started across the street. "To find Battle!" the hoarse answer came back.

The conquering Josephus was leaning meditatively upon the counter of the cigar-stand of his hotel when Alonzo found him. He took one look at the latter's face and backed to the wall, tightening his grasp upon the heavy-headed ebony cane it was his habit to carry, a habit upon which he now congratulated himself.

But his precautions were needless. Alonzo stopped out of reaching distance.

"You tell me," he said in a breaking voice; you tell me what you meant about Delilah and sirens and Samsons and inside facts! You tell me!"

"You wild ass of the prairies," said Battle, "I saw you last night behind them pa'ms! But don't you think I told it—or ever will! I just passed the word around that she'd argued you into her way of thinkin', same as she had a good many others. And as for the rest of it, I found out where the nigger in the woodpile was, and I handed that out, too. Don't you take it hard, my son, but I told you her husband left her a good deal of land around here. She owns the ground that they use for the baseball park, and

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her lease would be worth considerable more if they could have got the right to play on Sunday!"

Senator Trumbull sat up straight, in bed, that night, and, for the first time during his martyrdom, listened with no impatience to the prayer which fell upon his ears.

"O Lord Almighty," through the flimsy partition came the voice of Alonzo Rawson, quaveringly, but with growing strength: "Aid Thou me to see my way more clear! I find it hard to tell right from wrong, and I find myself beset with tangled wires. O God, I feel that I am ignorant, and fall into many devices. These are strange paths wherein Thou hast set my feet, but I feel that through Thy help, and through great anguish, I am learning!"

THE SILVER LAKE PANIC

BY RAYMOND S. SPEARS

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JOE CORTE, trapper, woodsman, and hunter, had always regarded the Silver Lake country as his own neck of the woods. His first winter trapping was from a little camp on Silver Popple Lake when he was seventeen years of age; and from that time, winter and summer, he had hunted, fished, and trapped around the chain of lakes, and over the neighboring range of mountains, till he believed he had a squatter claim on them.

For more than twenty years he had taken hunting-parties and fishing-parties to those woods, drawing pay as guide and provider; and when the hunting season closed, he would continue to follow the trails and blazed lines, tending traps. The virgin mountain forest held many marten, and along the streams were mink and otter. Occasionally he killed a bear, and he knew the fishers by the tracks they made in the snow.

Then the county weekly newspaper, for which Corte subscribed, carried for four consecutive weeks a notice announcing that William A. Treefall warned all persons against trespassing

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on Township 92 and the north half of Township 72, since these lands were reserved for forest conservation and the propagation of fish and game. Corte read the advertisement, and a cold streak traced goose pimples along his back-bone. All his chain of lakes and a large part of his range of mountains were embraced in the forty thousand acres of the area named.

"That's just a bluff!" Corte said to himself, after a while. "A man can't stop everybody hunting like that! Deer b'longs to everybody and that's where I gets my living—trapping and guiding. The law don't allow a man to take my living away that way!"

Corte was sure that he was right. At the opening of the lake fishing, as soon as the ice was out, he went to Silver Oak Lake to occupy his little camp there and catch a good lake trout or two. He noticed a new tin trespass sign nailed to a tree beside the trail; and at the lake he found his little camp burned to the ground. The embers were still smoking, and facing the ruins were two new trespass signs.

"That means me, I guess," Corte said to himself in a dazed sort of way. "Only one of them preserve-makers would burn a man's camp, with his blankets and stove and cooking things, that way!"

A new sense of caution suddenly born in his breast, Corte slipped away from the ruins of the camp and sat down on a log in a clump of hem-

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lock beside the lake. Here he could stare across the forbidden waters unseen. He sat there all the afternoon, turning over in his mind the condition that faced him.

He was not a man to be hasty. He could think quickly enough to shoot a deer the third jump it made. He could plan for weeks a campaign against some sly old otter, setting traps in the fall to catch it in the spring. Once he worked methodically all summer, making ready to shoot a huge bear whose trail he found in the last snow.

He regarded Treefall, the great Wall Street speculator, as an animal who was making trouble, and who must be taught his place. Corte's first thought was his rifle. A rifle is a sure means of opening a private preserve, but Corte did not want to kill anybody—anyhow, not yet.

The woodsman retreated up the mountainside to a place where he could pass the night under a leaning rock. Toward dusk he heard some one chopping down at the foot of the lake. He decided that it was the men who were posting signs and burning camps. The fall of the tree resounded through the woods.

By climbing a rock hedge and looking down the lake, Corte could see the new white tent pitched at the foot of the lake. The tent was on a rocky point, and there, doubtless, the preserve-maker would build a camp—a three-story house lighted by electricity and costing at least two barrels of money.

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Corte gritted his teeth at the thought. If he had brought a rifle instead of fishing-tackle, there might have been a tragedy, but Corte was unprepared—unarmed. He slept little that night.

The following day he went to Silver Maple Lake and caught a basketful of trout. He was just unjointing his rod when two men came out of the spring-damp woods behind him. He felt rather than heard them, and turned, surprised.

"Well, here's a man'll do for the first example!" one of the two said.

Facing him, Corte recognized the man who had made a private preserve of the Silver Lakes—a tall, slender man, with broad shoulders and a dry, brownish yellow face, somewhat wrinkled. Treefall's lips turned down at the corners in anything but drollery, and he was of the race of chisel-chins.

Corte said nothing, looking the man in the eye, and continuing to pack his rod. When it was in the canvas case, he heaved his little pack basket to his shoulders, slipped his arms through the straps, and stepped sharply over the back of the rock from which he had been fishing toward the woods, and past the two men who had caught him.

"Hold on there!" Treefall said. "We want you!"

"No, you don't!" Corte answered. "It's somebody else *you* want!"

Something in the tone, the gesture, and the

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look of the woodsman made the preserve-maker pause; and a minute later Corte was swinging with rapid steps through the woods out of his enemies' sight.

II

Corte went home, and two days later he was arrested on a warrant charging trespass. He was taken to the county seat, and there confronted a hawk-faced justice of the peace who "let him off easy," as the newspaper which printed the preserve's advertisement said. It was ten dollars and costs, or fifteen days in jail. Corte paid. He paid the price of a good rifle to learn the trespass law.

Treefall, as a witness, was in court, and he saw the money handed over. He started to smile, but the glance Corte gave him blistered the smile. The unshaven woodsman, in two-dollar trousers and a forty-five-cent shirt, had the look of the wolf in his eyes—the look of a frightened but unwhipped wolf.

From that day, Corte was under surveillance of a kind. Many ears listened for him to talk, but he made no comment on his fine. He seemed to be ashamed, in a way. He avoided men with whom he had been friendly. Toward others he maintained an impenetrable reserve.

He took parties into the woods, but he avoided the Silver Lake country. Sometimes, however, he went alone into the woods, taking fish-rod and

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rifle. An attempt was made to get evidence proving that he shot at one of the Silver Lake preserve-watchers, but nothing came of this, not even an arrest.

Corte's view-point changed during the summer months. If the Wall Street man had at first seemed an intruder, he had deftly compelled the woodsman to feel that he himself was the intruder. Fight as he might against this thought, Corte was unable to overcome it. Never before had he dreamed of feeling out of place in the deep woods; now he did feel so.

His thought turned to the world of which Treefall was a part—to the great city, to Wall Street, to things of which Corte had never dreamed. There came to his mind the possibility that if Treefall was able to oust him from the woods, where he knew all the trails, then perhaps a woodsman could somehow get back at Treefall in the speculator's own natural environment. It was a curious thought, but it appealed to the woodsman.

Corte had never wasted his money; his only extravagance was good tobacco. Year after year, from an income of about six hundred dollars for furs and five hundred dollars as a guide, he had saved more than half. This money was drawing interest in banks. For the first time, Corte reckoned it up; and he was surprised to find himself with an income, from the interest, of three hundred dollars a year. His little rainy-

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day nest-egg had become a whole hennery of producers.

He bought a ticket to New York, and walked down Broadway. He found Wall Street by using a compass and a map, and on Wall Street he stopped in front of the huge pile in which Treefall & Co. had their offices. A messenger-boy saw him; and pretty soon a number of people were standing around the woodsman, looking at him with almost as much interest as he had in staring at the towering buildings of the financial district.

A reporter, with a Wall Street "local color" assignment, saw the increasing crowd, and pushed his way to the nucleus of interest. Corte was just the man he was looking for; the reporter was one of the men Corte could use, too. The reporter wanted a story, and Corte wanted to know. So the woodsman was hustled up to a Park Row saloon, and talked out.

"I'm Bill Kelp," Corte told the reporter. "I'm from Beaver River. I guessed I'd come down and see Wall Street, and here I be."

With that for a starter, the reporter stepped to the telephone. It wasn't long before the woodsman met an artist, and the artist and the reporter took him back to Wall Street, and showed him the ways and scenes thereof. What he said the reporter noted, and how he looked the artist recorded in swift sketches. What the newspaper men said, Corte remembered.

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It was a great day for all three. When they parted, Corte was loaded with mining prospectuses, Wall Street editions, half a mile of tape, and so many statistical tables, circulars on short-term investments, news-letters, and various "free on requests," that he had to buy a dollar suit-case to carry them all.

III

He took the literature to his little cabin at Woodsport and read it word by word. When he had read it all, he subscribed for two papers, one devoted to the interests of Wall Street and one to exposing Wall Street. He was so much interested in the things he read that his catch of fur fell off one-half that winter; but what he learned was compensating. He knew something about Treefall and Treefall's ways. He also realized the depths of his own ignorance regarding the fundamentals of Wall Street.

In the spring he began all over again. He wrote to the several brokerage houses advertising from Wall Street, and the postmaster at Woodsport preserved a soap-box for Corte's mail.

Then Corte went to New York again. He had guided a Wall Street broker several summers, and he now went to the man's office. It was in a building across the street from the Treefall offices.

When Corte was jerked up to the seventeenth

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floor, and shoved into a marble hall, he spun around three times, he was so dizzy; but after a time he found his bearings, and Mr. Dougal Croupes was surprised and genuinely delighted to see the woodsman come in grinning.

"Yes," Corte said, "I expected I'd come down and see this here place. I was down last year, but I never thought of you. I kind o' wanted to talk to you. You see, I got a little money I'd like to put away."

It was a thousand dollars to invest, and Corte didn't want any margin buy. He had been reading conservative financial literature to some purpose. He told Croupes to buy ten shares of five-per-cent railroad stock.

His friend was interested. He wanted to know what started Corte to thinking about Wall Street. Corte hesitated for a long time, but finally he told the story—told how Treefall had beaten him out of his hunting-grounds, and how Corte, in turn, wanted to know Treefall's home country.

The broker looked across the street at the Treefall windows, and then at the woodsman. Then he looked back across the street.

"You're out for revenge against Treefall—on Wall Street?" he said, wondering whether he ought to smile or feel sorry.

"Yes, that's the size of it."

"You want to buck him in the market with that thousand of yours?"

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"That ain't all—that's just learning money," Corte answered.

"What? What?" the broker exclaimed. "You've got more to fight with—a lot more?"

"Yes," Corte said, hesitating. "I got more—quite a lot more."

"Whew!" Croupes half whispered, and, then facing Corte fairly, he said: "What's your game? I'm in, if you've got the goods!"

Corte looked across and down to the sign of Treefall & Co., printed in gilt on many windows.

"There's two ends to it," Corte said; "down here and up there." He nodded toward the North Woods. "Treefall's big in the market, ain't he? He's mighty important, ain't he?"

Croupes nodded his head.

"How'd he buy his stocks? He's got a raft of 'em, ain't he?"

"Yes, millions."

"On margin? He's tied up—a lot of it?"

Croupes nodded.

"S'posin' somethin' happened—s'posin' he dropped dead, or somethin'?"

"Gad! You wouldn't murder him!"

Corte shook his head.

"Why—why—" The broker was cautious. "If he—he should drop out, suddenly, there'd be a smash all right!"

"He's goin' into the woods nex' week," Corte said.

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The broker stared at the woodsman. He licked his lips. His eyes narrowed, and hard lines showed deeper in his face.

"I guessed you'd know what I'd orter do, s'posin' I knowed somethin' might happen to Treefall," Corte said in a low voice. "Treefall's robbed me, an' I reckoned—I reckoned I wanted to fix him!"

The broker hesitated. He had seen many things happen on Wall Street, but not just such a piracy as this backwoodsman seemed to suggest. He glanced toward the closed door, and then toward the woodsman, who understood.

"I don't expect he'd git killed," Corte said. "That ain't much good, and—"

"How then? What are you up to anyhow?"

"I jes' wanted to see the market drap, then jump up ag'in—that's all."

"And you?"

"I wish—here's five thousand more—I wish you'd fix it so when the market draps, nex' week, I git some money, and when it comes up ag'in, I'll make some more—when it comes up after she's went down, is the way I mean."

"But what—how—" Croupes began.

The woodsman stood up to go.

"What folks don't know won't hurt 'em any, so I guess I'd better go. Good-by! When you come up, I know where there's some mighty good cold-bed fishin'—rift-fishin's most over with now."

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"Er—you say the market drops next week—is that it?"

"I guess so, if old Treefall's as big as they say he is down here. He is, ain't he?"

"Yes, he's loaded up to the muzzle with stocks, but the market's going up for him, all right."

The woodsman, turning his toes in a bit, softly strode away, and the next time Mr. Dougal Croupes heard from him, something was doing.

IV

Corte returned home, and a day later he went to the Silver Lakes, arriving in the Treefall preserve soon after dusk. When he emerged, three days later, he was ready for Mr. Treefall's weekend on the Silver Lake preserve.

Corte knew many things about Treefall. His most valuable information was the fact that Treefall enjoyed long walks alone over the trails of his preserve. The trail that led toward the highest knob in the Silver Lake range was a favorite, but Corte knew that the man had not as yet climbed the peak. He knew, moreover, that two of the preserve's guides had built a little lean-to camp beside the highest spring of water on the mountain, and that it was too small a camp to be meant for more than one man. The only man likely to use it was Treefall.

In fact, one of the guides told Corte about the preserve-owner's lone journeys through the

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woods, and said that this camp was to be occupied by Treefall on his next trip into the mountains.

Treefall left the market in a satisfactory condition on Friday, the 23d. Prices were steady, and all that one had to do was to get the public interested and lift the market out of its dol-drums by showing profits on the bull side. Treefall was carrying a big line of stocks. Months later, he would sell at higher figures, and take the profits earned by his foresight of bumper crops and a business uprising.

Corte saw Treefall arrive at Woodsport, and head away for the Silver Lake preserve. Corte followed that night, and when Treefall started for the little camp on the mountain, Corte was hastening through the woods toward the border of the great preserve. Nightfall found the two men on the same mountain—one sitting facing the western sky, admiring the sunset, and proud of his forest domain; the other lurking in the low spruces and watching the lonely money-maker.

In the last twilight, Treefall drew a long breath and turned down to his little camp on the mountainside. He lighted a fire against a big boulder in front of the lean-to, and piled on it some green yellow birch cut by his guides. Then he sat on his pneumatic mattress sleeping-bag, staring into the bright flames.

Corte could watch his face and note its chang-

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ing expressions. Dreamy love of the wild woods and sharp antagonism with greedy men seemed to alternate in the features of the great speculator. Once or twice he straightened up uneasily and glanced into the surrounding gloom as if he felt the woodsman's stare; but his fire-dimmed eyes discovered nothing.

Long after dark Treefall stretched out on his sleeping-bag, and at last crawled into it. He drew the covering up over him, and pulled the head-flap down over his shoulders, so that he was only a bundle in the fading firelight. He was asleep when Corte crept up to the camp with a long rope coiled over his shoulder.

Corte was grinning. His chance in life was at hand. He crept in beside Treefall, and over the sleeping-bag he slipped a noose, which he hauled taut with a mighty yank. Then, quickly, he threw half a dozen half-hitches around the wriggling figure, and tied it fast.

"Jest you keep still!" Corte said, as Treefall tried to cry out for help. "If you don't, I'll drap you down the ledge!"

The woodsman shoved his hand in under Treefall's air pillow and drew out the automatic revolver which the bound arms of his prisoner could not reach. Then Corte took his deer-pack straps, and fastened them to the human bundle. Many a hundred-and-seventy-pound buck had been carried in those straps, and a hundred-and-thirty-pound man was no impossible

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load for the broad back and stout limbs of a mountain guide.

Corte went over the stone top of the mountain, where his moccasins left no mark on the rocks, and down the far side of the ridge, careful to feel his way down the grade, lighting his footsteps with a jack-lantern. When he stopped to rest, he talked soothingly to the Wall Street man.

"You're an awful load!" Corte said. "You're a bigger load on my back than you are on all them Wall Street fellers, I guess. What you s'pose'll happen down there when they hears you is turned up missing? And what you s'pose'll become of this here private preserve of yourn? I guess you'll feel you's cotched cold, layin' out in this here mountain!"

Sometimes Treefall started to shout, but Corte struck his fist through the sleeping bag cover, and the muffled yells subsided into grunts of pain. Then the woodsman would travel on again. Having reached the foot of the mountain, he began to cross the ridges beyond, taking the easiest routes. Dawn found him still stumbling along, with the owner of the Silver Lake preserve strapped to his back. It was far back in the wilderness, and the beginning of a long rain-storm was at hand.

Luck was with Corte. He tramped on, stopping only to rest, or to feed his captive or himself on pieces of jerked venison.

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"You'd better eat some," he told the man, poking pieces into the sleeping-bag. "It's nice private preserve jerk, that is!"

Far up a narrow, rock-sided ravine, Corte came to a little shelter which he had built there. In front of this he dropped his burden on the ground, and sat down to rest.

"About to-morrow," Corte said, "folks'll begin to wonder where you are. Next day, they'll begin to look. You'll make a darned interestin' mystery, disappearin' this way!"

He untied the sleeping-bag, and ordered Treefall to hold out both hands. This done, he wound a cross-haul log-chain around the speculator's slender wrists, and locked them fast with a small snap lock.

"Now you can come out," Corte said; "but leave my face alone."

Wriggling and twisting, Treefall made his way out of the sleeping-bag. He was sore from head to foot, and his face was pale with the utmost wrath he had ever felt.

"You'll pay for this, let me tell you—you'll go up for twenty years for this!" he exclaimed to the masked figure before him. "You'll—"

"Hold on!" Corte exclaimed. "You're paying me for spoilin' these here woods with trespass signs. You ain't all settled yet, either, understand that!"

The menace of the disguised woodsman reached the heart of the preserve-owner. The ugly little

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automatic pistol in the woodsman's hands was pointed close to him. Treefall glanced down the narrow ravine, whose sides seemed to rise into an overhanging wilderness of evergreen trees. The little hollow was a mere split in the eternal granite, and it looked as if at any moment the over-arching forest and rock might give way and fill up the crack.

Treefall had never been there before, and he knew that it was the inmost of the wilderness places. He sat down, overcome with the unhappy sense of weakness that strong men feel when they find themselves utterly in the power of another.

"You can yell, if you want to," Corte said. "Listen!"

Corte called, and the sound was banked in the ravine. If it went any distance, it was straight up into the tiny patch of sky high overhead, in which the stars were faintly visible, as from the bottom of a deep well.

"I got you, old man! Now you stay here. There's some grub, such as it is, and you won't starve. Of course, if I fall an' break my neck gettin' out of this, you'll have lots of time to repent of your sins before you die—thinking how you stole other folks' good times huntin' an' fishin' in the Silver Lakes. Good-by!"

He slipped away and silently vanished in the wet gloom of the forest depths. The other end of the cross-haul chain was locked around a birch-

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tree just outside the shelter. It gave Treefall a thirty-foot radius of action, and there was a trickling spring of water, several pounds of jerked venison, two or three pound cakes of maple sugar, and a peck of dried corn. He wouldn't starve to death; on the other hand, he wouldn't be likely to overeat. A Wall Street bull was never more securely corralled than William A. Treefall.

Joe Corte, pausing to glance back at the little shack, which he had used to trap from, felt sure that it was a safe place. Satisfied, he tucked his mask under a log, where it would be handy when he returned. He climbed the mountainside, swung around its steep shoulders, and finally came down into the open hardwood farthest from the Silver Lake preserve. He waded down two or three brooks, as a precaution, and then swung around into his home country. At midnight he was in his cabin. He stewed a broth of swamp ash-bark whittlings.

At ten o'clock the following morning, when Superintendent Hopple, of the Silver Lake private preserve, came storming into his cabin, to turn out men to find the missing Wall Street man, Corte was doubled up on his bed, white as a sheet, suffering from cramps and nausea.

"I can't help you," Corte groaned. "I've been sick three days here!"

"Heavens, man! You're the only one knows

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all that country—it'll be worth a heap of money to—"

"I don't want no money," Corte answered; "but when a man's lost—I can't stand that!"

Corte staggered to his feet, took a drink of blackberry brandy, and limped away after the superintendent to the rig. At the post-office, however, he collapsed.

"I can't go!" he cried. "I'm too weak. You say he was alone on the mountain? Like as not he walked in his sleep. Circle around the mountain—they's a lot of cracks and holes into it, and maybe he's in one of them."

Away went half a hundred men to the sacred precincts of the Silver Lake private preserve. They climbed in a long line, side by side, to the top of the mountain, and came down the sides of it, yelling as only woodsmen can yell.

V

A whisper reached Wall Street that morning that all was not well with William A. Treefall, king of the bull herd. A shiver ran through the market, and prices began to flutter. The noon edition of the *Whoop* announced in large capitals:

TREEFALL LOST IN THE WILDERNESS!

Treefall's specialties dropped three points in the next hour.

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That night the reporters who arrived at Woodsport, hungering for information, found a broad-shouldered woodsman sitting on the post-office steps.

"My name's Joe Corte," he said to the reporters. "I wouldn't be here—I'd be looking for that feller that's lost—only I was sick."

He told what he had heard, however, and described the anxious superintendent, and the wagons-loads of woodsmen hurrying off to the private preserve. Then he described the Silver Lake mountains, and vividly pictured the loneliness of the forest in which Treefall was lost, and the perils that might confront the missing speculator.

The morning newspapers were not reassuring to Wall Street. Early in the day Mr. Dougal Croupes covered Joe Corte's shorts, and later, when prices rallied, he went short again. It looked as if Treefall was going to be sold out on his margins, for the banks were worrying about their loans.

"I wish that confounded woodsman would put me wise!" Croupes muttered, and then he regretted that he knew as much as he did.

There was no telling what a fool man from the mountains would do. Croupes tried to get Corte on the telephone, but the woodsman was gone.

Next day, when the reporters had reached the scene of the man-hunt, and every newspaper had

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six or seven columns of reading matter and pictures, Corte came to Wall Street and walked into Croupes's office.

"I reckon," he said, "you'd better buy stock pretty quick now."

"They're going to take Treefall over to-day—going to sell him out—his margin's about done for."

"All right! Jest you buy some stocks for me—all that you can get with the money you've made for me."

Corte slipped away, and went back to the woods. He dropped off the train on the dark side, and once more, moccasined, he ran into the mountains over his own trails, guided by the stars and the lay of the land.

When he came to the edge of the Silver Lake preserve, he could hear the distant shouts of two hundred men who were pounding through the woods, carrying lanterns. From a mountain-side, Corte looked down into the valley of search. It was as if fireflies were flickering through the forest.

"Only five miles out the way!" Corte muttered to himself.

He tramped on through the hardwood to the mountain of the ravine. He arrived at his little cabin at dawn. It was very quiet. A shout brought forth no answer.

Surprised, Corte became cautious. Going down to the cabin, he found the chain still fast

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to the birch-tree. The other end ran to a boulder in front of the cabin. The wrist loop was there, but not the prisoner. Treefall had worked himself loose!

Corte examined the ground, and circled. He found where Treefall had climbed the side of the ravine. He followed the man's tracks by the packed moss and scuffed dirt, but lost them in the woods above the ravine.

"Well, he's having a nice walk in his stocking feet!" Corte said to himself.

He wound up the forty pounds of chain and sank it in a hole in the rocks. He ate a stick of jerked venison and a handful of parched corn; then he turned homeward again. When he arrived at the post-office, he found Superintendent Hopple paying off the searchers with yellow-back bills.

"Look what I told you!" Hopple said to Corte. "If you hadn't be'n sick, you'd had some, too."

Corte shook his head.

"You found him, then?"

"Nope. He come out, though, over Spruce Hill country."

"Good! He's all right, then?"

Hopple hesitated, glancing at a reporter, and one of the searchers answered for him:

"He's out, but"—the speaker tapped his forehead—"scared to death, I guess!"

"That so? What's he say?"

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"Oh, he's got off a long lingo about somebody catching him and tying him up in his sleeping-bag, and chaining him to a tree, and all that. You know how men do when they're lost and scared in the woods. Golly, though, but he must have had a dream! Said a masked man done it."

Corte laughed. When he went down to settle up with Croupes the next day, the broker shut two doors behind them.

"Gad," he said, "if Treefall ever gets on to this!"

"This" was a memorandum representing Corte's account with Croupes's firm. The woodsman's savings had been multiplied five times on the market slump and several times more on the rise. In a few days, the broker said, he would receive stock certificates that would mean a comfortable annual income.

"I reckon I don't care about huntin' on the Silver Lake preserve any more," Corte said. "I'll go to Canada and shoot moose!"

Corte started to go.

"Say," the broker almost whispered, "what's that Treefall said about being chained to a tree, eh?"

"That? Oh, he had a bad dream, and walked in his sleep, that's all. That's what I bet on."

"What? You bet on him walking in his sleep? That's nerve!"

"Sure! That's what you got to have, to win on Wall Street!"

THE HAPPIEST TIME

BY MARY STEWART CUTTING

THE HAPPIEST TIME

BY MARY STEWART CUTTING

“AREN’T you coming to church with me this morning?”

“Well—not *this* morning, I think, petty.”

“You *said* you would.”

“Yes, I know I did, but I have a slight cold. I don’t think it would be best for me, really, petty. I’ve been working pretty hard this week.” Mr. Belmore carefully deposited a pile of newspapers beside his armchair upon the floor of the little library, removing and opening the top layer for perusal as he spoke, his eyes already glued to the headlines. “A quiet day will do me lots of good. I’ll tell you what it is—I’ll promise to go with you next Sunday if you say so.”

“You always promise you’ll go next Sunday,” Mrs. Belmore, a brown-haired, clear-eyed young woman in a blue and white spotted morning gown, looked doubtfully, yet with manifest yielding, at her husband. Mr. Belmore presented the radiantly clean and peaceful aspect of the man who has risen at nine o’clock instead of the customary seven, and bathed and dressed in

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the sweet unhurried calm that belongs only to the first day of the week, poking dilatorily among chiffonier drawers, discovering hitherto forgotten garments in his closet, and leisurely fumbling over a change of shirt-studs before coming down to consume the breakfast kept waiting for him.

"Of course I know it's your only day at home—" Mrs. Belmore reverted to her occupation of deftly setting the chairs in their rightful places, and straightening the books on the tables. "I suppose I *ought* to insist on your going—when you promised—but still—" She gave a sigh of relinquishment. "I suppose you *do* need the rest," she added. "We can have a nice afternoon together, anyway. You can finish reading that story aloud, and we'll go out and take a good look at the garden. I think the beans were planted too close under the pear tree last year—that was the reason they didn't come up right. Edith Barnes and Alan Wilson are coming out from town after dinner for the rest of the day, but that won't make any difference to us."

"*What?*"

"Now, Herbert, how could I help asking them? You know the boarding-house she and her mother live in. Edith never gets a chance to see him alone. They're saving up now to get married—they've been engaged a year—so he can't spend any more money for theatres and things, and they just have to walk and walk the streets, unless

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they go visiting, and they've been almost everywhere, Edith says. She wrote and asked me to have them for this Sunday; he's been away for a whole week somewhere up in the State. I think it's pathetic." In the warmth of explanation Mrs. Belmore had unwittingly removed the pile of newspapers from the floor to an ottoman at the further end of the room. "Edith says she knows it's the happiest time of their lives, and she does want to get some of the benefit of it, poor girl."

"What do they want to be engaged for, anyway?"

"*Herbert!* How ridiculous! You are the most unreasonable man at times for a sensible one that I ever laid my eyes on. Why did *we* want to be engaged?"

"That was different." Mr. Belmore's tone conveyed a permanent satisfaction with his own case. "If every woman were like you, petty—I never *could* stand Edith, she's one of your clever girls; there's something about her that always sets my teeth on edge. As for Wilson—oh, Wilson's just a usual kind of a fool, like myself. Hello, where are my newspapers—and what in thunder makes it so cold? You don't mean to say you've got the window open?"

Mrs. Belmore had a habit of airing the rooms in the morning, which her husband approved of theoretically, and combated intensely in practice. After the window was banged shut she could hear

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him rattling at the furnace below to turn on an extra flow of heat before settling down once more in comfort. Although the April sun was bright, there was still a chill in the air.

She looked in upon him, gowned and bonneted for church, sweet and placid of mien, followed by two little girls, brave in their Sunday best, all big hats and ribboned hair and little starchy ruffles showing below their brown coats. Mrs. Belmore stooped over her husband's chair to kiss him good-by.

"You won't have to talk to Edith and Alan at all," she said, as if continuing the conversation from where they had left off. "All we have to do is to let them have the parlor or the library. They'll entertain each other."

"Oh, don't you bother about that. Now go ahead or you'll be late; and don't forget to say your prayers for me, too. That's right, always go to church with your mother, girlyes."

"I *wish* you were going, too." Mrs. Belmore looked at her husband lingeringly.

"I wish I were, petty," said Mr. Belmore with a prompt mendacity so evidently inspired by affection that his wife condoned it at once.

She thought of him more than once during the service with generous satisfaction in his comfortable morning. She wished she had thought it right to remain at home, too, as she did sometimes, but there were the children to be considered. But she and Herbert would have the

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afternoon together, and take part of it to see about planting the garden, a plot of twenty feet square in the rear of the suburban villa.

The Sunday visit to the garden was almost a sacrament. They might look at it on other days, but it was only on Sunday, beginning with the early spring, that husband and wife strolled around the little patch together, first planning where to start the summer crop of vegetables and afterward watching the green things poking their spikes up through the mould, and growing, growing. He did the planting and working in the long light evenings after he came home, while she held the papers of seeds for him; but it was only on Sunday that he could really watch the green things grow, and learn to know each separate leaf intimately, and count the blossoms on the beans and the cucumbers. From the pure pleasure of the first radish through all the various wiltings and shrivelings incident to amateur gardening in summer deluge and drought, to the triumphant survival of tomato plants and cucumber vines, running riot over everything in the fall of the year, the little garden played its old part as paradise to these two, who became more fully one in the watching of the miracle of growth. When they gathered the pears from the little tree in the corner of the plot, before the frost, and picked the few little green tomatoes that remained on the dwindling stems, it was like garnering a store of peaceful happiness. Every

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stage of the garden was a romance. Mrs. Belmore could go to church without her husband, but to have him survey the garden without her would have been the touch beyond.

It must be horrid, anyway, she thought, to have to go every morning into town in those smoky cars and crowded ferryboats; just to run into town twice a week tired her out. Now he would have finished his paper—now little Dorothy would have come in, red cheeked from her walk, to kiss daddy before her nap—now he must be pottering around among his possessions and looking out for her. She knew so well how he would look when he came to the door to meet her. The sudden sight of either one to the other always shed a reflected light, like the glow of the sun. It was with a feeling of wonder that she marked its disappearance, after a brief gleam, as he not only opened the door, but came out on the piazza to greet her, and closed it behind him.

"They're in there—Edith and Alan." He pointed over his shoulder with his thumb. "I thought they weren't coming until after dinner."

"Why, they weren't."

"Well, they're in the parlor, just the same. Came out over an hour ago. Great Scott, I wished I'd gone with you. I'm worn out."

"You don't mean to say you've stayed with them all the time!" Mrs. Belmore looked scandalized.

"I should say I had; I couldn't lose 'em.

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Whichever room I went to they followed; at least she did and he came after. I went from pillar to post, I give you my word, petty, but Edith had me by the neck; she never let go her grip for an instant. They won't speak to each other, you see; only to me. I haven't had a chance to even finish the paper. I've had the deuce of a time! I don't know what you are going to do about it."

"Never mind; it will be all right now," said Mrs. Belmore reassuringly. She pushed past him into the parlor, where sat a tall, straight girl with straight, light brows, a long straight nose, and a straight mouth with a droop at the corners. In the room beyond, a thickset, dark young man with glasses and a nervous expression was looking at pictures. It did not require a Solomon to discover at a glance how the land lay.

If Mrs. Belmore had counted easily on her powers of conciliation she was disappointed this time. After the dinner, whereat the conversation was dragged laboriously round four sides of a square, except when the two little girls made some slight diversion, and the several futile attempts when the meal was over to leave the lovers alone together, Mrs. Belmore resigned herself, perforce, to the loss of her cherished afternoon.

"It's no use; we'll have to give up the reading," she said to her husband rapidly, in one of her comings and goings. "Perhaps later, dear. But it's really dreadful; here we've been talking of

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religion and beet-root sugar and smallpox, when any one see that her heart is breaking."

"I think he is getting the worst of it," said Mr. Belmore impartially.

"Oh, it won't hurt *him*."

"Well, you've given them plenty of opportunities to make up."

"Yes; but he doesn't know how."

She added in a louder tone, "You take Mr. Wilson up to your den for a while, Herbert; Ethel and I are going to have a cosey little time with the children; aren't we, dear?"

"Have a cigar?" said Mr. Belmore as the two men seated themselves comfortably in a couple of wooden armchairs in the sunny little apartment hung with a miscellaneous collection of guns, swords, and rods, the drawing of a bloated trout, and a dusty pair of antlers.

"Thank you; I'm not smoking now," said Mr. Wilson with a hungry look at the open box on the table beside him.

"Oh!" said his host genially, "so you're at that stage of the game. Well, I've been there myself. You have my sympathy. But this won't last, you know."

"Does your wife like smoking?"

"Loves it," said Mr. Belmore, sinking the fact of his official limit to four cigars a day. "That is, of course, she thinks it's a dirty habit, and unhealthy, and all that sort of thing, you know; but it doesn't make any *difference* to her—not a

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pin's worth. Cheer up, old fellow; you'll get to this place, too."

"Looks like it," said the other bitterly. "Here I haven't seen her for a week—I came two hundred miles on purpose yesterday, and now she won't even look at me. I don't know what's the matter—haven't the least idea—and I can't *get* her to tell me. I have to be off to-morrow at seven o'clock, too—I call it pretty hard lines."

"Let me see," said Mr. Belmore judicially, knitting his brows as if burrowing into the past as he smoked. "Perhaps I can help you out. What have you been writing to her? Telling her all about what you've been doing, and just sending your love at the end? They don't like that, you know."

Mr. Wilson shook his head. "No; upon my soul, I've done nothing but tell her how I—how I was looking forward to—oh, hang it, Belmore, the letters have been all *right*, I know that."

"H'm," said Mr. Belmore, "there's got to be *something* back of it, you know. Seen any girls since you've been gone?"

Mr. Wilson hastened to shake his head more emphatically than before. "Not one," he asseverated with the relief of complete innocence. "Didn't even meet a soul I knew, except Brower—you remember Dick Brower? I went into a jeweler's to get my glasses mended and found him buying a souvenir spoon for his fiancée."

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"O—o—h!" said Mr. Belmore intelligently, "and did you buy a present for Edith?"

"No, I didn't. She made me promise not to buy anything more for her; she thinks I'm spending too much money, and that I ought to economize."

"And did you tell her about Brower?"

"Why, of course I did—as we were coming out this morning."

Mr. Wilson stared blankly at his friend.

"Chump!" said Mr. Belmore. He bit off the end of a new cigar and threw it away. "Wilson, my poor fellow, you're so besotted in ignorance that I don't know how to let the light in on you. A man is a fool by the side of his fiancée, anyhow."

"I don't know what you mean," said the bewildered Wilson stiffly. "I don't know what I'm to do."

"No, of course you don't—but Edith does—you can just trust her for that. A girl *always* knows what a man ought to do—she can give him cards and spades and beat him every time."

"Then why doesn't she *tell* me what she wants? I asked her to, particularly."

"Oh, no! She'll tell you everything the opposite—that is, half the time. She'll put every obstacle possible in your way, to see if you're man enough to walk over 'em; that's what she wants to find out; if you're man enough to have your own way in spite of her; and, of course,

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if you aren't, you're an awful disappointment."

"Are you sure?" said Mr. Wilson deeply, after an awestruck pause. "Half the time, you say. But how am I to find out when she means—I give you my word, Belmore, that I thought—I suppose I could have brought her a small present, anyway, in spite of what she said; a souvenir spoon—but she hates souvenir spoons."

"You'll have to cipher it out for yourself, old man," said Mr. Belmore. "I don't set out to interpret any woman's moods. I only give you cold, bare facts. But if I were you," he added impartially, "I'd go down after a while and try and get her alone, you know, and say something. You can, if you try." A swish of skirts outside of the open door made Mr. Wilson jump forward as Mrs. Belmore came in sight with her friend. The latter had her arm around the older woman, and her form drooped toward her as they passed the two men. The eyes of the girl were red, and her lips had a patient quiver. Mr. Wilson gave an exclamation and sprang forward as she disappeared in the further room.

It was some hours later that the husband and wife met unexpectedly upon the stairs with a glad surprise.

"You don't mean to say it's you—alone!" he whispered.

"Wait—is she coming up?" They clutched each other spasmodically as they listened to the

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sound of a deflecting footstep. There was a breathless moment, and then the chords of a funeral march boomed forth upon the air. The loud pedal was doing its best to supplement those long and strenuous fingers.

The listeners breathed a sigh of relief.

"He's gone to the station for a time table," whispered the husband with a delighted grin; "though I can stand *him* all right. We had a nice walk with the little girls, after he got tired of playing hide and seek. I wished you were with us. You must be about used up. How are you getting along with her?"

"Oh, pretty well." She let herself be drawn down on the hall window seat at the top of the landing. "You see, Edith really feels dreadfully, poor girl."

"What about?"

"Herbert, she isn't really sure that she loves him."

"Isn't sure! After they've been engaged for a year!"

"That's just it. She says if they had been married out of hand, in the first flush of the novelty, she wouldn't have had time, perhaps, to have any doubts. But it's the seeing him all the time that's made her think."

"Made her think *what*?"

"Whether she loves him or not; whether they are really suited. I remember that I used to feel that way about you, dear. Oh, you know, Her-

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bert, it's a very serious thing for a girl. She says she knows her whole life is at stake; she thinks about it all the time."

"How about his?"

"Well, that's what I said," admitted Mrs. Belmore. "She says that she feels that *he* is so rational and self-poised that she makes little difference in his life either way—it has come to her all at once. She says his looking at everything in a matter-of-fact way just chills her; she longs for a whole-souled enthusiasm that can sweep everything before it. She feels that if they are married she will have to keep up the ideal for both of them, and she doesn't know whether she can."

"No, she can't," said Mr. Belmore.

"She says she could if she loved him enough," pursued Mrs. Belmore. "It's the *if* that kills her. She says that when she wakes up in the morning she feels as if she'd die if she didn't see him before night, and when she *does* see him it's all a dreadful disappointment to her; she can't talk to him at all, she feels perfectly hard and stony; then, the moment he's gone, she's crazy to have him back again. She cries herself thin over it."

"She's pretty bony, anyway," said Mr. Belmore impartially.

"Even his appearance changes to her. She says sometimes he looks like a Greek god, so that she could go down on her knees to him, and at other

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times— Once she happened to catch a glimpse of him in a horrid red sweater, polishing his shoes, and she said she didn't get over it for weeks; he looked positively *ordinary*—like some of the men you see in the trolley cars."

"Oh, good gracious!" protested Mr. Belmore feebly. "Oh, good *gracious*, petty! This is *too* much."

"Hush—don't laugh so loud—be quiet," said his wife anxiously.

"If Wilson *ever* looks like a Greek god to her, she's all right, she loves him—you can tell her so for me. *Wilson!* Here are we sitting up here like a pair of lovers, and they— Hello!"

The hall door opened and shut, the piano lid closed simultaneously with a bang, and there was a swirl of skirts again toward the staircase that scattered the guilty pair on the landing. The hostess heaved a patient sigh.

"They *shall* speak," said Mrs. Belmore when another hour had gone with the situation still unchanged. Her gentle voice had a note of determination. "I can't understand why he doesn't *make* her. She is literally crying her eyes out, because the whole day has been lost. Why didn't you send him into the parlor for a book, as I told you to, when I came up to take care of Dorothy?"

"He wouldn't go—he said he wasn't doing the kindergarten act any more. Hang it, I don't blame him. A man objects to being made a fool of before people, and he's tired of it. Here he

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goes off again to-morrow for two weeks, and she with no more heart than—”

“Where is he now?” asked Mrs. Belmore.

“Upstairs in my room, smoking.”

“*Smoking!* I thought he’d promised her solemnly not to smoke.”

“Yes, he did; but he says he doesn’t care a—red apple; he’s going to have some comfort out of the day. I’ve left him with a box of cigars; good ones, too. He’s having the time of his life.”

“O—o—h!” said Mrs. Belmore, with the rapt expression of one who sees beyond the veil. When she spoke it was with impressive slowness. “When you hear me come downstairs with Edith and go in the parlor, you wait a moment and then bring him down—*with his cigar*—into the library. Do you understand?”

“No,” said Mr. Belmore.

“Oh, Herbert! If she sees him *smoking*—! There’s no time to lose, for I have to get tea to-night. When I call you, leave him and come at once, do you hear? Don’t stop a minute—just come, before they get a chance to follow.”

“You bet I’ll come,” said Mr. Belmore, “like a bird to its—I will, really, petty.”

That he nearly knocked her down by his wildly tragic rush when she called from the back hall, “Herbert, please come at once! I can’t turn off the water,” was a mere detail—they clung to each other in silent laughter, behind the enshrouding portières, not daring to move. The footfall

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of the deserted Edith was heard advancing from the front room to the library, and her clear and solemn voice, as of one actuated only by the lofty dictates of duty, penetrated distinctly to the listeners.

"Alan Wilson, is it possible that you are *smoking*? Have you broken your promised word?"

"Well, they're at it at last," said Mr. Belmore, relapsing into a chair in the kitchen with a sigh of relief, and drawing a folded newspaper from his pocket. "I wouldn't be in his shoes for a farm."

"Oh, it will be all right now," said Mrs. Belmore serenely. She added with some irrelevancy, "I've left the children to undress each other; they've been *so* good. It's been such a different day, though, from what we had planned."

"It's too bad that you have to get the tea."

"Oh, I don't mind that a bit."

She had tucked up the silken skirt of her gown and was deftly measuring out coffee—after the swift, preliminary shaking of the fire with which every woman takes possession of a kitchen—pouring the water into the coffee-pot from the steaming kettle, and then vibrating between the kitchen closet and the butler's pantry with the quick, capable movements of one who knows her ground thoroughly. "Really, it isn't any trouble. Margaret leaves half of the things ready, you know. If you'll just lift down that dish of salad for me—and the cold chicken is beside it. I hate

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to ask you to get up, but— Thank you. How good the coffee smells! I know you always like the coffee I make.”

“You bet I do,” said Mr. Belmore with fervor. “Say, petty, you don’t think you could come out now and take a look at the garden? I’m almost sure the peas are beginning to show.”

“No; I’m afraid there isn’t time. We’ll have to give it up for this Sunday.” She paused for a great effort. “If you’d like to go by yourself, dear—”

“Wouldn’t you mind?”

She paused again, looking at him with her clear-eyed seriousness.

“I don’t think I mind now, but I might— afterward.”

If he had hesitated, it was for a hardly appreciable second. “And I don’t want to go,” he protested stoutly, “it wouldn’t be the same thing at all without you.”

“Everything is ready now,” said his wife. “Though I do hate to disturb Edith and Alan. I’ll just run up and hear the children say their prayers before I put those things on the table. If you would just take a look at the furnace”—it was the sentence Mr. Belmore had been dreading—“and then you can come up and kiss the children good-night.”

Mr. Belmore, on his way up from stoking, caught a glimpse projected from the parlor mir-

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ror through an aperture in the doorway which the portières had left uncovered. The reflection was of a girl, with tear-stained face and closed eyes, her head upon a young man's shoulder, while his lips were touchingly pressed to her hair. The picture might have been called "After the Storm," the wreckage was so plainly apparent. As Mr. Belmore turned after ascending the flight of stairs he came full in sight of another picture, spread out to view in the room at the end of the hall. He stood unseen in the shadow regarding it.

His wife sat in a low chair near one of the two white beds; little Dorothy's crib was in their room beyond. The three children were perched on the foot of the nearest bed, white-gowned, with rosy faces and neatly brushed hair. While he looked, the youngest child gave a birdlike flutter and jump, and lighted on the floor, falling on her knees, with her bowed head in the mother's lap, her hands upraised. As she finished the murmured prayer, helped by the tender mother voice, she rose and stood to one side, in infantine seriousness, while the next one spread her white plumes for the same flight, waiting afterward in reverent line with the first as the third hovered down.

It was plain to see from the mother's face that she had striven to put all earthly thoughts aside in the performance of this sacred office of ministering to innocence; her eyes must be holy

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when her children's looked up at her on their way to God.

This was the little inner chapel, the Sanctuary of Home, where she was priestess by Divine right. It would have been an indifferent man, indeed, who had not fallen upon his knees in spirit, in company with this little household of faith, in mute recognition of the love and peace and order that crowned his days.

He kissed the laughing children as they clung to him, before she turned down the light. When she came out of the room he was waiting for her. He put his arm around her as he said, with the darling tenderness that made her life:

"Come along, old sweetness. We've got to go down and stir up those lunatics again. Call *that* 'the happiest time of your life!' *We* know better than that, don't we, petty? I'll tell you what it is: I'll go to church with you next Sunday, if you say so!"

IN THE WAKE OF WAR

BY HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES

IN THE WAKE OF WAR

BY HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES

THERE is nothing so elusive yet so fascinating as a chance resemblance. We walk a street crowded with thousands of human atoms like ourselves, yet each meaningless, unindividual. The mass has the consistency of a stream of water parted by a stone. Suddenly one of these atoms acquires form, color, substance, and character; its individuality strikes a chord in the brain. A thousand disassociate fragments—memory-worn strands of time and place—struggle to coalesce, to reweave themselves into a pattern we once knew. Our thoughts give aid. Recollection puzzles itself, finds itself impotent, rages at its own powerlessness. At such a moment the mind recurs again and again with painful insistence to the problem, and the chance resemblance, by reason of aggravation, acquires an importance wholly disproportionate. The man who pursues such a will-o'-the-wisp memory does so protesting, in spite of himself.

It was in some such frame of mind that Brent Maxwell stood looking out across the desolate hillside. The landscape still mourned, in black-

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ened stone walls and thinned forests, the devastation of Sherman's march to the sea. The bare unpromise of the scene was in his soul. He knew the gaunt poverty that follows in the wake of war. He had fought loyally for the Union. And now, after fifteen years of reconstruction, he had learned that Appomattox had dawned only upon the first chapter of defeat. The fierce patriotism which had led him, a youth of enthusiasm and dreams of the glory of sacrifice, to leave his place and portion in the North when the first call sounded, and the earnestness of intention with which he had flung himself into the newly breathing industrial life of a Southern city, had had time to cool and sober. In spite of success the very intensity of the struggle against adverse conditions had bred in him a resentment against the necessity which made green fields a desert, plantation a waste, and a smiling country a cemetery of unmarked graves. Something of the dogged sadness which hung on the people among whom he elected to dwell had centred into him. He had lived down the hatred and the sneer, but the process had made him bitter against the circumstances which had given this hatred rise.

On this early morning his thoughts, which had been busy estimating the possibilities of the farm, whose deeds he had in his pocket, and whose foreclosure had brought him from his own city, had been suddenly arrested and turned from their

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channel. A rattling vehicle had passed him, containing two figures—a man and a woman. The faces of both interested him. The woman's was sad and sober-sweet, surmounted by pearl-gray hair. There was a little color in her cheeks. The man had dead white hair and beard, with face blue-tinged and shifting eyes of yellow. He wore a heavy butternut overcoat and a knitted nubia of childishly bright colors.

There was something in this last face that started reverberating echoes in Maxwell's brain. An intangible hand was at work tying together loose ends of recollection. He knew and yet he did not know. Wherever he looked, as he plodded over the farm land, he saw this blue face and dodging gaze. It came before him with an absurd incongruity and yet with a reiterate malevolence.

The sun was high as he walked back toward the village, past the great, gray-columned house whose shambling porticoes pointed to a past of wealth and grandeur. As he neared the gate a sudden cry made him quicken his steps. A repeating scream—a man's, yet wolf-like, rising and falling with monotonous inflections—filled all the hollows with sound. Its note had a quality of the animal that thickened the hearer's blood. It came from the house. Maxwell broke into a run, burst open the gate and rushed toward the porch.

Rounding a clump of evergreens he saw a

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strange spectacle. Seated on the ground was the blue-faced man, his fingers clutching the stubble, his lips emitting the beast-like screams which had brought Maxwell from the roadway. Bending over him, with her back toward the gate, was the lady of the sad face and the pearl-gray hair. She was smoothing the thin fringe from the sunken temples, bending now and then to lay her lips caressingly and sobbingly upon his head. From under her arm the yellow eyes looked out straight toward Maxwell. He felt them pass shiftily across his face with a sense of shrinking repulsion. The volume of screams showed no abatement.

The tones with which the woman sought to soothe this outburst were exquisitely tender. "Poor Victor!" she was saying; "poor, poor boy!"

Maxwell had stopped short at the mad lustre of those yellow eyes; the woman had not heard his approach. With a strange tightening of the throat he shrank behind a bush and retreated to the road, looking fearfully back over his shoulder. Throughout the long walk back to the village hotel, at every turning, this picture started before him—a slight, gray-gowned figure with hands whose trembling motions suggested the settling of a dove to guard its young, and from under whose caress gleamed out topaz eyes in which lurked the devil of madness.

He stared over the table of the low-ceiled,

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smoky-beamed dining-room, unheeding the conversation, his mind pursuing the vagrant resemblance of the morning. He came to himself with a sort of shock to hear his neighbor say: "That's the first time I've seen ole Vic Brockman for two years. Miss Ma'y Ann took him drivin' this mornin'—you ought to seen 'em. The ole fellow had on a nubia that had as many colors as a peacock's tail. Queer how he hangs onto life all these years," he continued reflectively. "It'd be a blessin' if he'd shuffle off. Speakin' of women—there's a woman for you! Job Stacker, when he lived on the next farm, used to say that she cared for that idiot brother of hers ever since the war like a baby. If he'd got killed out and out, instead of comin' home with no top to his head and no sense in it, it'd been better for her. Then she could have married that sweetheart of hers and had troubles of her own."

He turned to Maxwell. "I was talkin'," he said, "of Miss Brockman, who owns the Pool place—that big white house over the hill. It's a pity the mortgage changed hands. I suppose Miss Ma'y Ann is going to be sold out. It's hard. Old Squire Pool, her grandfather, was the biggest man in four counties, and befo' the war her ma was the high-headest girl you ever saw. Wonder who got that mortgage?"

In the evening, as Maxwell and the village lawyer, who was Justice of the Peace, Conveyancer, and Notary Public all in one, walked in

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the fading light up the hill toward the property which was so soon to be sent to the hammer, there was small conversation between them. The papers requiring the final signature protruded from Maxwell's great-coat pocket. His mind was wandering through a labyrinth of recollection, pursuing the phantom of a blue face, surmounted by rough, white hair, and two eyes shot with feline yellow, which met his and wavered away in ferret uneasiness. The likeness clung to him with a wilful persistence, and he swept his hand impatiently across his eyes as if to banish the thing that baffled him.

As the two men seated themselves in the lamp-light of the great room, which yet bore the inextinguishable marks of aristocracy, Maxwell became unpleasantly aware of a huddled object on a sofa, which seemed to create in itself a centre of attraction. The errand was not a pleasant one, though relieved by the serene face and low tones that belong to the gentlewoman; but in the lax face of old Victor Brockman was another element—an element of arrested progress, of piteous recoil—the genius of unconscious despair. It drew Maxwell while it repelled him. He found himself turning his head to gaze upon it.

He realized in the midst of a genial sentence that the yellow eyes had ceased their roving, and had settled, fixed and stealthy, upon his face.

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The aggravating resemblance again caught his attention.

Thereafter he ceased to be himself—ceased in some inexplicable way to feel his will and intention master of the situation. The idiot's gaze had got upon his nerves. He found himself shifting in his seat, pushing his chair back by slow degrees to bring the sofa between him and it. Now and then he turned his eyes unwillingly to meet that look: the yellow eyes had ceased to twitch, and now rested with, it seemed to him, a quiet, dreamy hatred upon his own. The gaze affected him strangely; it angered him. He felt himself put out by this meaningless persistence. His smooth sentences flowed with less ease, and he felt a nervous contraction in the muscles of his throat.

Miss Mary Ann had drawn nearer to the squat occupant of the sofa, and her hand, trembling unwontedly, he thought, reached out now and then to touch the frayed sleeve. And surely the lawyer was looking at him closely. Maxwell felt himself sweating, and yet internally scoffing at this strange mood that had smitten him.

The situation was a simple one, and yet it had suddenly become impossible to him. He, Brent Maxwell, landowner, dealer in farm properties, had come to present an official paper for signature. He had done it scores of times, and yet the usual conversation with which custom softens the unpleasant alternatives of business failure

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into kindly and courteous agreement had become suddenly a way of pain—a chapter of indefinable reproach. A look of vacant, yellow eyes, grown steadfast, was making this hour one of loathing and horror.

As the last words were spoken and the necessary signatures were affixed, he snatched the papers from the lawyer's hands, crushed them into his pocket, and in sudden revulsion, his tense nerves released, sprang to his feet.

The effect upon the huddled figure opposite him was instantaneous and terrible. It cringed backward, with a shrinking gesture of fear and agony. Its palsied arms, shaking and uncertain, wavered before its face. A shriek came from its lips, but this time not the monotonous, wordless wail of habit, but an articulate cry: "My God! My head! Don't strike me again!"

Maxwell dimly heard the sobbing cry with which the sister's arms went round the cowering, abject figure, and the lawyer's abrupt ejaculation of astonishment and reassurance, as he rushed to the door and flung himself out into the frosty evening. His breath was coming heavily, and his fingers worked nervously in and out of clinched fists. As the sky opened before him, a vision hurled itself with the appalling directness of a thunderbolt before him—a vision of an acre of bloody, trampled sward, iron-sown, and blue with pungent wreaths of smoke. In the foreground a dismantled gun, prone upon whose

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stock a figure lay, with blackened face and tattered gray uniform, and over it a second figure swinging a clubbed musket, remorselessly cruel with the lust of war. The crest of that spattered knoll strewn with quiet forms—these two alone fiercely erect. Then the clubbed weapon descended. From the limp figure stretched across the gun rose two protesting arms; two hazel eyes looked from beneath the bloody mat of hair, and a voice shrill and terrifying: "My God! My head! don't strike me again!"

The vision blurred. Gusts of smoke came in between. Did the blue figure strike again? Did it? *Did it?*

Maxwell threw his hands toward the night sky that flared with that quick rose of condemnation and died again, as though appealing and inviting doom. The vision had scarce faded into the dim of the early night sky when the lawyer came down the steps. It was as though he had approached, black-robed and grotesque, from the corner of the dimming picture—a vengeance witnessing and impeaching, binding him, the Brent Maxwell of that savage battery charge, to the Brent Maxwell of this day, a strong man flying from the piteous pallor of a shrunken and deranged wreck.

The one upon whom this sudden panic of soul had crashed like a falling tower gripped him fiercely by the arms. "The man in there," he said hoarsely, "the man with the blue face and

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yellow eyes—the man that looked at me! Did you see him look at me?”

The other shrank back half fearfully. “Why, Maxwell,” he said, “what’s the matter? It was merely a fit of some sort. I thought you knew he was crazy. Why, man, you’re shaking! Come along and we’ll get something to warm us up.”

“Did you see him put up his hands?”

The lawyer drew away his arm, almost angrily. “Heavens!” he said, “you’re almost as bad as the old man himself. He’s crazy, I tell you, plumb crazy, and has been ever since they brought him home from the war. He was struck in the head by a shell or something.”

“Yes, yes. Where? Where was it? What battle was it?”

I’ve always heard it was at Missionary Ridge.” The match he struck against his boot-heel burned, sputtering, as he bit the end from a cigar.”

Maxwell suddenly drew from his pocket the packet of papers; the parchment crackled as he reached forward and held a curling corner to the flame. While the lawyer stood in a maze Maxwell waved it, a flaming funnel, around his head until it scorched his fingers. As he dropped it to the ground, a mass of slowly blackening embers, a white shadow sprang out of the surrounding circle of blackness. It was Miss Mary Ann.

“Miss Ma’y Ann,” cried the lawyer, “do you see what he’s doing? He’s burned up the mort-

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gage! He's burned it up! That's all that's left of it there on the ground!"

Miss Mary Ann stepped forward half fearfully, her fascinated eyes on the glowing firebrand between them. She clasped her hands together. "Sir," she said, painfully, "sir"—then she stopped.

An overmastering desire seized Maxwell to take upon himself the act of that dead day—to shout to them both that he, *he*, had been asked mercy and had denied it. It was the right of war, but now, after all these years, it had recoiled upon him in shame. Circumstance had again put in his hand the weapon; the lust of acquisition called upon him to strike, but as he stood face to face with this new victim, out of that red mist of the stained past that cry had sounded, and his hand dropped nerveless before the same helpless, accusing eyes. He would have shouted that it was not charity, not kindness, that spared that roof, but self-accusation—a yearning for atonement and for absolution.

He received her broken words of gratitude with a sense of shame upon his soul, and the lawyer's bluff comments upon his benefaction pierced him like swords of searing.

As Maxwell turned again toward the village, he rested his gaze upon the hillside, sleeping under the early stars. Field and knoll were covered silvery with the sheen of hoar-frost lances.

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It seemed the dwarf symbol of buried armies—thousands upon thousands of the dead, who died with upthrust bayonets still standing to guard in death the integrity of homes. And standing thus, with the sorrow of his thought upon him, Maxwell cried to his own soul, no less than to his land, to glory, to power, to war, and to victory:

“What have you done? What have you done?”

THE TALL ONE AND THE WEE ONE

BY RUTH SAWYER

THE TALL ONE AND THE WEE ONE

BY RUTH SAWYER

I

IT had been Dr. Danny's boast through forty years of practice that never in his father's time, or in his, had a trust been misplaced or a kindness gone unpaid. Making it, he was not mindful of his own power to draw naught but goodness from his people; he was thinking only of the unfailing worthiness of Donegal folk.

"I am not meaning," Dr. Danny would add to the tail of his boast, "that I have not had my doubts, but in the end they were thrashed. Aye, always!"

"'Tis thrue," confirmed Tomais the bailiff, as one with authority. "Moreover, I can tell ye how it comes so—an' 'tis not because virtue hangs over every man's door in Donegal. Whenever Dr. Danny asks for bread and is handed a stone, do ye think he throws it afther the man that fetches it? Never! He takes it—always wi' that smile o' his—an' thanks besides, and says as how it will come in mortal handy for grindin' his meal. An' the man gets so shameful he asks

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the docther immediately can't he fetch the meal for him, an' do the grindin' into the bargain! So 'tis bread the docthor gets in the end every time—that's how it comes throe."

But Tomais the cobbler wagged his head ominously. He was a man from another county, with a tongue as sharp as his needle, and an eye ever searching about for the cloud to cross the sun.

"'Tis sinful," said he, "to be over-boastful. Some day, ye'll see, yon docther will be findin' a hole in Donegal virtue big enough for all his patchin' to let through a bit o' real devilment. Ye'll see!"

The prophecy came to pass; although, as the bailiff reminded the doctor afterward—

"The blame lay at the door o' County Tyrone, an' not Donegal, praise be!"

And one of the neighbors—having put by a dim memory of Willie Shakespeare—quoted soberly:

"Some be born vagabones; some have it learned them; but there be others that take to it natural, no matther what the birth or the raisin'!"

The last was the only way with the two of them—the Tall One and the Wee One. What were their Christian names, if they ever had any, Donegal has long since forgotten. Posterity will know them only by the names old Hannah gave them the day they scraped the mud of Tyrone from their brogues on the doctor's threshold.

TALL ONE AND WEE ONE

II

It was a hot day in midsummer when the two came over the rise of the hill that bordered Tyrone and the two neighboring counties. Silence lay between them—a sign that things were not prospering. The growth of a fortnight's beard covered their faces, rags were aplenty, and there was never a suspicion of soap or water about either of them.

It was the Tall One that raised the silence:

“’Tis small use of your talkin’,” and he frowned at the other from under a pair of eyebrows as thick and overroofing as a fresh-laid thatch. “Yourself knows well that afore ever one brogue passes its mate ten more times, it is choosin’ we’ll be atween Fermanagh and Donegal; an’ not a sign to show will it be luck or a constable waiting over the bordther!”

“’Tis not myself that holds the gift o’ gab,” snorted the Wee One. “’Tis a deal o’ throuble ye’d be missin’, if yourself would think once for every hundtherd times ye speak; an’ pattern afther your betthers!”

“Is it yourself ye are meanin’ by them compliments? Faith, I’m thinkin’ ’tis too grand ye are gettin’ entirely, an’ we’d best be partin’ at the next crossroads!”

But at the next crossing the arm of the Wee One was through his companions, and their heads were close together.

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"We'll set yondther by the mill-sthream an' eat the bannock I found by chance, just, in a cabin by Omagh, an' I'll tell ye what is in my mind this day."

The Tall One nodded approval, while he drew from out the rags of his shirt a shapeless, sticky bundle wrapped in a sheet of the *Derry Journal*.

"'Tis a sin," he said mournfully, passing a half-filled honeycomb under the nose of the Wee One. "Aye, 'tis a sin how the farmers make them wee black creathures work! I took this from one of the hives furninst Omagh to save them the throuble, just, of fillin' it entirely. 'Twill go grand wi' the bannock!"

The two stretched their lengths on some bracken banking the stream, and silence again fell between them while they ate. When the last crumb of the bannock had gone, and a final lick had been given the *Derry Journal*, they closed their eyes and dozed contentedly in the sun, after the manner of vagabonds who mind well the scriptural warning concerning the cares of the morrow. An hour they slept, and then the Wee One rolled over and prodded his companion with an urgent fist.

"'Tis like yourself to sleep peaceful an' leave me to thrash my mind wi' worry over the future. Harken now. Yondther"—and his finger pointed to the distant hills of Donegal—"there lives a docthor."

"What's that to us?"

TALL ONE AND WEE ONE

“’Tis meat an’ shelter—an’ clothes an’ silver, maybe—that’s what! Will ye listen to me sensibly, or shall I leave ye for the good-for-naught ye are, an’ thrail my fortune alone?”

The Tall One eyed his fellow vagabond despondently.

“Faith, ye’ve killed my hopes like a black frost. Did ye ever see good fortune an’ a docthor ridin’ together?”

“’Tis different, this. Maybe ye’ve heard tell o’ this docthor, and maybe ye’ve not. Anyhow, I’ll freshen your memory a bit. It seems this bodach from Donegal is as soft as butter new-churned. ’Tis as easy workin’ the milk o’ human kindness from the one as buttermilk from the other. All ye need is a long face an’ a longer throuble, with a tongue to match, an’ ye can get anything from a free bed to a crock o’ gold from the poor, simple man.”

“An’ what is our throuble?” asked the other, interest catching him.

The Wee One looked over at him pityingly. “Man, man, your memory is failin’ ye fast, that’s sure; an’ ’twill take a deal o’ freshenin’. Ye’ve got the erysipelas, an’ ye’ve got it bad! All on account o’ the smallpox scare, that’s turned Ty-rone foolish, ye’ve been thrown out o’ work. Not a body will house ye or feed ye; an’ I, bein’ with ye, am farin’ the same. The constables are afther the two of us for the pest-house, an’ we’ve thramped ten days, dodgin’ them an’ starvin’.”

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"The constables is thrue enough; but how in the name o' Finn MacCumhal will I get the erysipelas?"

"'Tis clean ye'll get first—that's what!" said the Wee One, and he pointed with a commanding finger to the stream below. "A spill yondther will mend the two of us considerable. Aftherwards ye can part wi' that King Edward beard o' yours, an' I'll part wi' the same. Then we'll be searchin' for the nearest bed o' nettles in Donegal, an' ye'll get your erysipelas afore another sun goes down!"

A rebellious groan finished the sentence.

"Be a man, can't ye?" snorted the Wee One. "Faith, would ye rather go back to Tyrone, an' get jailed for the pig we lifted off Father Mac-Hugh?"

"But couldn't yourself be gettin' the erysipelas?" suggested the Tall One.

"Myself—an' ye carry the tale? How far do ye think ye would get over the docthor's door-sill, wi' that murdtherous face o' yours? No, no, laddy! 'Tis ye for the nettles an' me for the tale!"

Another groan followed, but the rebellion had gone out of it, and there was naught but misery left in. Before ever it had passed beyond the stretch of bracken the two were stripped of their rags. Like adventurers in a strange country, they dropped fearsomely into the mill-stream.

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"Take a fistful o' sand an' scrub—'tis bettther nor soap!" commanded the Wee One.

The other, recognizing the voice of generalship, obeyed.

Their journey to Donegal was uneventful, and is soon told. They lifted a pair of fowls off a farmer at Drumquin, and bargained them to a tinker at Lough Derg for a razor. It was there they shaved—each man the other; and, treading on the heels of evening, they skirted Donegal Bay and came at dusk upon the ruins of the Abbey of the Four Masters.

"'Tis as likely a place for nettles as a sick man would care to see," said the Wee One. The next moment he was astride a fallen tombstone, laughing loud with the joy of victory. "Come here yourself an' I'll give ye the grandthest attack o' erysipelas an Irish docthor ever laid his two eyes on!"

III

It was midnight when old Hannah heard their knocking. Peering at them from under the lamp she held, she called across to Dr. Danny in his study.

"There be's a tall one an' a wee one wantin' ye—will I let them in?"

So the christening was made; and luck stood by as godfather to them both. For it happened that the doctor himself was but just housed after a day of wearisome visits; and his heart was full

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of thanksgiving for his own warm hearthside, and pity for the homeless who tramped the road. Moreover, the old couple he had housed for a year past had been claimed by a son whose memory and conscience had slept overtime; and their room was empty.

If there was any set of mortals for whom the doctor had scant use—it was his brother practitioners in the County Tyrone; so he listened eagerly to the tale that dripped smoothly from the tongue of the Wee One.

“ ’Tis like them!” he said at the end. “I have known a Tyrone doctor to start a scarlet fever scare with a case of nettlerash,” and he chuckled appreciatively.

Then he took the lamp from old Hannah’s hand and held it close to the face of the Tall One.

The seconds were centuries for the vagabonds. While Dr. Danny’s sharp eyes traveled at a periwinkle’s pace over the one, the other stood in the shadow and trembled. Full well did the Wee One know the price he would pay if his plan failed. Only once had he felt the avenging arm of the Tall One, but he had not forgotten its strength.

Fear dragged at his heart as his eyes followed Dr. Danny’s to the Tall One’s face. The sand of the mill-stream had fretted the skin, the tinker’s razor had scraped it sore, and the Wee One had spared neither muscles nor nettles on it.

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"Sure, I'd not be knowin' it was a face at all, if it wasn't afront of his hair!" he thought. "If the docthor turns us back on the road this night, I'll be lyin' unther them nettles by mornin'!"

But Dr. Danny put down the lamp with a shake of his head.

"'Tis not a miracle at all that they took it for smallpox. Hannah, here—ye can put the two of them in the empty room upstairs; we'll let them bide a while till we see what comes of it. 'Tis not erysipelas, either, I'm thinking."

The trembling went out of the Wee One's knees, and it was with a steady hand that he rubbed his stomach.

"Ten days o' starvin', wi' naught to thramp on but the smell of another man's dinner, does be a bit discouragin'," he remarked thoughtfully.

"It does that," said Dr. Danny heartily. "Hannah, ye can fetch them the cold duck, and what else ye have to go with it."

It was well for the two that Dr. Danny did not sit by as they ate. Old Hannah wore a grim smile as she gathered up the bare bones of the duck, and measured five fingers less of the doctor's old port.

"They'll bear watchin'!" she muttered to herself, as she closed the door of their room on them that night.

As her brogues clumped out of ear-shot, the Wee One patted the goose-feather quilt on the

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bed with one hand, while he dug the Tall One in the ribs with the other.

"Ducks inside of us an' geese atop of us! Faith, is it not worth the price of a few nettles, laddy?"

IV

Bit by bit the promise foretold by the Wee One was fulfilled. The milk of human kindness flowed aplenty; food and drink—aye, and clothes. The doctor picked out two of his good homespun suits and sent them up by old Hannah the next morning; and though legs and sleeves overlapped the one, and a considerable length of ankle and wrist was left uncovered on the other, the two appeared at breakfast respectable and volubly grateful.

It was then that the Wee One resumed his generalship.

"'Tis not willin' at all we are to be acceptin' your favors, an' eatin' your victuals, with never a bit in return. We'll not be boastin' o' the past that was ours once—an' there be's many a gentleman afore us that has taken the road along wi' misfortune. A gentleman's honor be's that delicate, 'tis easy hurt; an' it's not for the likes o' us to take charity from any one. So while we bide unther your rooftree we'll see to it that ye are not the loser. Your garden's needin' a bit o' work, an', if ye agree, we'll do some prunin' an' fixin' up for ye."

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Now the garden was Dr. Danny's Eden, and his roses—next to his patients—the thing that lay closest to his heart. He knew every slip and graft of them, and nursed and coaxed the fragile and the sickly into good health after much the same manner that he used with his people. But of late there had been a deal of sickness among the hills, which had kept him away from cock-crow to thrush-call, and the garden told plainly of the enforced neglect. So it was with a smile and nod of approval that he left the two that first day, a spade and hoe across the back of each, and drove away toward the hills.

Then it was that the Tall One turned with a snarl, and raised his spade above the other's head.

"Ye've loaded me with a straw too many, an' I'll not play your camel an instant longer! I've washed to please ye, an' scraped my face to please ye, an' let ye card my face wi' nettles as if I were a sack o' wool instead of a human man; but I'll not break my back wi' spadin' for any docthor in Christendom. I'll go back to Tyrone an' get jailed first!"

"Whist, laddy, who asked ye to be doin' either? Do ye think I've spent my life cultivatin' the habits of an Irish gentleman to ruin my character entirely wi' a sthroke o' work?" The Wee One closed one eye in a knowledgeable way. "Come away from the house, an' the ears o' that ferret-woman, laddy, an' I'll tell what's in my mind."

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The two passed out of Hannah's sight, behind the trellised roses.

"There's a lad hereabouts we can hire for ninepence a day to do the work. We can instruct him while we rest an' enjoy the scenery furninst.',

"'Tis a grand idea!" The sarcasm that was in the voice of the Tall One was as biting as a green gooseberry. "But how are ye knowin' there's a lad hereabout? An' findin' him, how will ye get the nine-pence a day—from off the leprecaun?"

The Wee One again closed an eye in a knowledgeable way. That was all; but it marked the beginning of what had long been prophesied by Tomais the cobbler.

The lad was found and bound, and the promise of ninepence a day—to be paid at the week-end—held his tongue. Through the days that followed the Tall One "instructed" from under the shade of a tea-rose bush, while the smoke from the doctor's best cigars curled skyward. Luckily for the two, old Hannah was heavy and slow of foot, seldom crossing the door-sill save on sick-bed missions or for mass.

The doctor, returning after each hard day, found his roses pruned and blooming fairer and more abundantly; and his heart warmed toward the two.

"'Tis as I have long said," and he repeated the old boast to the bailiff. "A kindness never goes unpaid in Donegal."

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V

While Dr. Danny boasted, the Wee One took up his trail, with the scent of fortune fresh in the wind.

He found the doctor's "books"—an old linen-bound ledger—holding the records of the money paid for services, and a few brief notes of history relative to patients and cases. There was no account entered against the unpaying, for Dr. Danny had never yet been known to send a bill among his hill people. A man gave what he could, when he could, and the doctor never allowed a second payment for the same service, no matter how small the first might have been. Hence the ledger.

It was this book that lay across the knees of the Wee One, on the fourth day after their advent. He ran a stubby finger down the column of names and figures:

Peter O'Friel, for pneumonia.....	£1
Barney McBride, baby.....	10s
Michael Hegarty, leg broken.....	5s
Earl of Dromore, rheumatism.....	£5

And so on. The Wee One chuckled to himself and vaggged his head after the manner of a man well content. A moment he listened for old Hannah's steps in the kitchen beyond. Then he measured two fingers down on the brandy decanter from the doctor's closet, drank to the mark, picked out a cigar from the box on a

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neighboring shelf, and, closing the door softly behind him, went out.

"'Tis a sin," he said aloud, speaking to a gander crossing the road. "Maybe ye are not knowin' it, but 'tis a sin for the work of such a grand man to go for a slither. If they paid more, they'd be thinkin' more of what they be's gettin'; an' 'tis myself will be pointin' them this day the thorny way to virtue!"

So it came about that the hill people made the acquaintance of the Wee One. He dropped into their cabins "neighbor like," and whether he made a long visit or a short one, he never came out without a fuller pocket and a more contented smile.

"'Tis but their duty I'm learnin' them," he said to the Tall One, as he paid off the lad and counted the remaining shillings and pennies between them. "'Tis a sorry sight to see them that close-fisted. Faith, I'm near weepin' when I finish the tale o' the docthor's throubles; how 'tis meat but once a week, an' the tea low in the crock, an' never a dthrop in the bottle against cold weather an' old age. 'An' why?' says I. "'Tis on account of the greedy lot o' ye, workin' him to the bone for the price of tuppenny bit here an' a sixpence there!' 'Twould warm your heart, laddy, to see them hill folk steppin' lively to the pile laid by in the chimney-corner, or in the heel of a sock, an' bring out the silver."

A beatific grin spread over the face of the Tall

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One, but with the Wee One's next remark it faded.

"Laddy, your erysipelas is improvin' over fast. We'll be thrampin' to the abbey this night for another attack!"

VI

A month passed—a month of toil for the lad among the roses, and of food, drink, and silver aplenty for the vagabonds, with nettles once a week for the Tall One. Then came a night when Tomais the bailiff happened upon the two unawares in the Abbey of the Four Masters. Listening, he learned more concerning vagabondage than he had known in all his years of service to the British law.

"'Twill take the heart out o' Dr. Danny," he muttered, as he passed on down the road; "but 'tis a rare chance for a man to teach virtue to a pair o' rascals!"

What passed between the bailiff and the doctor in the study that night, I cannot be telling; but when the two vagabonds came in, they were greeted with the usual smile.

"'Tis fearsome I have grown about you," said Dr. Danny, his eyes looking straight into the Tall One's. "I'm thinking I have not been careful or considering enough. The erysipelas is growing no better, and like as not the other will be taking it. 'Tis time ye had the best medical care I can give ye; so I'll paint the both of ye

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with iodine this night, and to-morrow I'll stay home and look after ye properly."

As he took out a small brown bottle, and covered the faces of the two with a generous hand, a worried, uneasy look was cast from the tail of each vagabond eye.

"Aye, 'tis worse than erysipelas!" continued Dr. Danny, with a grave air. "There's a greenish look about the eyes and a thick sound to your tongue—which is bad, very bad!"

It was heavy hearts the two of them carried to bed that night; and the weight grew with the morning, when Dr. Danny came to them at dawn, a thermometer and stethoscope in his hands.

"Ye've got a high fever, both of ye," he said, after they had been thumped well and their pulses felt. "And, what's more, your hearts are mortal weak. I can never forgive myself for letting two poor, kind-hearted lads work as ye have over the roses—and ye sick and failing. Have ye pains anywhere?"

There followed two groans. While one pair of hands felt cautiously over a humpy brown face, the other rubbed a well-fed stomach.

"Poor, poor lads!" Dr. Danny's eyes grew moist with the sadness of it all. "Faith, there will be a burden on my conscience till I have the two of ye out of danger!"

The Wee One rolled slowly toward the outside of the bed, but a firm hand rolled him back again.

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“Faith, is it an undertaker ye are wanting, instead of a doctor?” Dr. Danny asked in amazement. “Ye must rest quiet on your back, till the heart trouble and the fever go, and I discover what ails ye. I’ll have old Hannah brew ye a bowl of senna tea for your breakfast.”

Years of fear and misery were crowded into that day. The two lay flat on their backs, holding their breath, the better to count the heartbeats, and listening for old Hannah’s feet on the stairs when she should come fetching the senna tea. For they had it for breakfast, for dinner, and for supper, without a morsel besides.

Ever and anon came Dr. Danny to thump, and sound, and count their pulse, and take their temperatures; and always did he leave with a more worried shake of his head and the look of trouble deeper in his eyes. The two, noticing, would draw the goose comfortable closer about their chins, and groan aloud.

On the second day Dr. Danny lingered by the bedside.

“Are ye feeling better?” he asked anxiously.

The two shook their heads.

“I’m thinking,” he went on thoughtfully, “I’ve found the trouble. ’Tis a sad day, and a sadder task to break it to ye! Are ye feeling sick in your stomachs?”

The two groaned assent.

“Did ye stop, by chance, and rest by a stream on your way hither, and eat a bite, maybe,

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falling asleep afterward while ye lay on the turf?"

"Aye, we did that!"

"Then it's as I've been thinking—the two of ye have swallowed an alp luachra!"

The two stiffened and rose upright in bed. Their hair rose with them; their faces whitened.

The alp luachra! Aye, full well they knew, as every son of the Irish sod knows, the tales the old women tell of those who have slept with their mouths open by running water, and have had the little green lizards run down their unsuspecting throats. The tales are as old as the faeries, and as plenty, and only the foolish scoff at them.

"The alp luachra!" wailed the Wee One.

"St. Patrick!" groaned the Tall One.

"Aye," said Dr. Danny, "'tis bad business. Can ye feel them squirming? No doubt but there are half a dozen by now—they are terrible creatures at multiplying!"

Two trembling hands went to two stomachs and rubbed cautiously.

"'Tis myself that can feel them," whispered the Wee One, "cavortin' an' swishin' their tails! For the love o' mercy, can ye cure us, docthor?"

The Tall One let go of his breath with a groan and turned his face toward the wall, closing his eyes as one resigned to certain death. Dr. Danny considered carefully before he spoke.

"Aye, I can cure ye; but 'tis a hard treatment,

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and ye must promise strict obedience before I take ye in hand, or the end may be fatal. First, where was the stream ye rested by?"

"In Tyrone—just over the bordther."

"Good! Listen, then. For two days ye must eat salt pork—no other food, and no drink whatsoever—not even a drop of water. On the third ye tramp back to Tyrone, and there, flat on your faces, on the bank of the stream ye will lie. The alp luachras ye have swallowed, along with the families they have raised since, will be so dry with the pork they will be crazy for water, just, and as soon as they get a whiff of the stream they'll come running out for a drink. Remember, 'tis a pound of pork a day, and no water! Lest temptation should get the upper hand of ye, I'll lock the door behind me, and keep the key."

VII

It was two weak and shuffling vagabonds that took the road for Tyrone on the third day.

"Can ye hear your tongue scrapin'?" asked the Wee One hoarsely.

"I can that. Faith, 'tis a hundthred yards long an' as thick as a sod o' turf. Nettles was paradise to this!" sighed the Tall One.

They reached the border at last, and staggered blindly up the hill and down to the mill-stream—seeing naught, heeding naught. Like a driven, spent quarry they fell, with barely strength

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enough to hang their heads over the running water and open their parched mouths.

It was then that Tomais the bailiff stepped out of the bracken near by and laid a firm hand on the shoulder of each.

"A word wi' the two of ye!" he said slowly. "Hereafter, this is as near as ye had best come to Donegal. 'Tis there that the climate be's worse for erysipelas; an' ye'll find that nettles grow longer an' sharper in your own county. Moreover, Dr. Danny's thinkin' he can keep the wolf from his door without the help of either of ye; an' he was askin' me to tell ye there was no steady cure for the alp luachra but honest work, taken regular, eight hours a day!"

A twelvemonth later, Tomais happened on the bailiff from County Tyrone, and asked him concerning the two.

"Faith, 'tis reformed they are, entirely; they've not been on the county since. But, do ye know, I've noticed a sthrange thing about the two—they'll go a mile round by the bog rather than pass a pig on the road, an' ye can't get either o' them nigh a churchyard or a mill-sthream!"

CAPTAIN PIKE

BY THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

CAPTAIN PIKE

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I

CAPTAIN ALEXANDER PIKE was homesick. It has been said that a man may become accustomed to anything. Alexander Pike was accustomed to being homesick; but he did not like it any better for that. Sometimes he faced it almost cheerfully, at other times almost desperately, according to circumstances and conditions. This voyage was one of his bad times, for he had left the two younger of his four children ill with measles.

Captain Pike was a big man—tall, broad, and thick. To look at him, to meet him in a foreign port and know him as men know men, you would never suspect that memories of two ailing children gnawed at him day and night. His face was broad and red. His hot, blue eyes were staring and protuberant, and his manner was sudden, direct, and almost fierce. You would know him, at a glance, for a masterful man of action; but a hundred glances would not disclose to you the considerate husband and the doting father.

After forty days at sea, the *Fortune's* anchor

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was let go inside the brick-topped reef off Pernambuco. She was boarded immediately by a fat brown harbor-master with gray hair and a black mustache, by a fat brown doctor with gold-rimmed spectacles and a startling assortment of English words and phrases, and by a slender youth from the consignee's office.

The youth brought a bundle of letters and papers for the ship. Pike fairly snatched them from his hands, sorted out his own in a perfect fury of haste, and tossed what remained to the steward. The steward departed to act as postman, having already placed bottles, glasses, and a jug of clear Newfoundland water on the cabin table.

It would seem that the brown officials had come aboard for no other purpose than to investigate the condition of the captain's whisky. They got to work without loss of time. The merchant's clerk stood modestly until urged by Mr. Dixon, the mate, to take a seat and a glass. It was Mr. Dixon who did the honors of the ship. Captain Pike, who had wrenched the envelope from every letter even before the harbor-master had tipped a bottle, stood with his back to his guests and glared at the six letters from his wife as if he would read both sides of every page at once.

He breathed heavily through his nose, and the muscles of his great shoulders worked beneath his linen tunic until you could almost hear them creak. He had very little control over his tre-

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mendous vitality. He would spend as much strength in the reading of a letter that interested him as in clearing away the wreckage of a broken topmast in a gale of wind.

Now everything was forgotten but the thin, ink-scrawled pages in his hands. First, he made a feverish examination of the dates of the separate missives, and found that the last had been written fully twenty days after his departure from Harbor Grace. Next he scanned its pages hastily, and assured himself that his two younger children had recovered from their illness, and that every member of the family was well—up to the date of the last letter, at least.

The sense of relief which possessed him seemed actually to expand his heart. Folding the letters in order, he pushed them into his pocket, for a careful reading later, and turned to his guests. For forty days and forty nights anxiety had gnawed at his heart; and now the reaction unbalanced him for the moment. He leaned over the mate's shoulder, splashed whisky into a glass, sloshed water upon it, and glared around the table.

"Chin-chin! Here's lookin' at you!" he exclaimed.

He gulped the liquor, and clapped the empty glass on the table with such force as to knock the bottom out of it.

"Good news, sir?" inquired Dixon, who had been watching him closely.

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Captain Pike nodded, swept the broken glass to the deck with a swift stroke of his big hand, and sat down on the locker beside the harbor-master.

"Where's Watts?" he asked. "It's not like Jimmy Watts to be late for a reunion of this kind."

He indicated one of the half-empty bottles with his thumb.

"We were just talkin' about him," said the mate. "Dr. Da Castro tells me he sold out his business an' left Pernambuco about three weeks ago. Went back to England. Is that right, doctor?"

"You bet that very well right," returned the doctor, proud of his command of English as she is spoke.

"And who has the business now?" asked Pike. "No thievin' Portugee, I hope!"

Mr. Dixon blushed. The harbor-master helped himself to more whisky with a preoccupied air. The clerk from the consignee's office stared intently at his empty glass. Dr. Da Castro laughed.

"Present company except, my chum-friend Pike," he remarked.

"Of course," said the Captain, unabashed. "That goes without sayin'. You wouldn't be drinkin' my whisky if I didn't know you were straight. But who is the new man in Jimmy Watts's ship-chandler business?"

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“The name is Lewis,” replied the doctor, “and the nation is English. He indicates himself as one time a shell-back man—not like Jimmy, who was of a polite polish. I am exile without Jimmy. He was a polite man for the English nation. This Lewis give me, as you say, the hump.”

Ten minutes later the captain went ashore with the clerk, carrying his despatch-box under his arm. It took him just ten minutes to shake hands with the consignee, show his papers, and learn that the *Fortune* could pull into the wharf on the following morning and commence winching out her cargo of fish. Then he sat down at a desk in the consignee’s office, and gave all his attention to the reading of the six letters from Harbor Grace. His instructions from owners and charter-party could wait another half-hour.

The perusal of the letters moved him deeply and tenderly; but to judge by the expression of his face, he might have been reading something calculated to result in a suit for libel. There were certain passages which fairly twisted his heart with tenderness and longing; but the more his heart was wrung, the more fiercely did his blue eyes glare at the paper. One sentence ran:

Little Sandy still refuses to go to bed without your old blue coat to sleep with.

He stared straight ahead of him for several minutes, then tucked the letters away in his pocket, and wrote the following:

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DEAR MOLLY:

Your six letters have come to hand. I was glad to get them, as you know, and sincerely trust that more are on the way. It is a great relief to me to hear that you are all well. We had a long voyage, but uneventful, and made port about an hour ago—as the owners will be letting you know from the office in a few minutes, I suppose. We are to begin unloading tomorrow. With any degree of luck, we should have our freight out and our ballast aboard inside of two weeks. I have received instructions to take on molasses in Barbados. Don't forget that you have the cable address of our agents here, if anything serious should happen. Tell the children I will bring them another parrot, and perhaps a monkey, if I can find a good one.

Your affectionate husband,

ALEXANDER PIKE.

This was all he could tell of the longing, the tenderness, and the heartache which surged and throbbed in his breast; but it would be enough for Molly, who knew the capacity of his heart as well as the limitations of his power of expression. Mr. Dixon knew him to be not one-tenth as dangerous as he looked; but his wife was the only person in the world who knew him to be a sentimentalist without power of expression—a lamb with the mask and skin of a lion.

Captain Pike sealed and stamped his letter, and posted it with his own hand. Voyage after voyage, it had been his custom to post all his private correspondence himself. The agent put this down to but another phase of his insulting manners—to the desire to flaunt his distrust of the Portuguese clerks. The real reason, however, was of a purely sentimental nature.

Having dropped the letter into the box for foreign mails, Pike laid his course for the waterfront. He glared around him fiercely as he strode

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along, like a man looking for an insult or an enemy; but his heart and mind were fully occupied with the picture of the four-year-old Sandy refusing to go to bed without the companionship of the old, pipe-scented, weather-stained blue jumper. "Oh, Lord! Just think of it!" he murmured. "Sleep with that old jumper because it smells tobaccoish—like me!"

II

When he came out of his reverie, Captain Pike found himself before the dusky entrance of the ship-chandler's establishment. He halted, turned, and stepped from the hot, unshadowed square to the cool gloom of the big store.

He was thirsty, and also he was curious about the man who had taken over Jimmy Watts's business. He had always given the ship's trade to Jimmy, who was as honest as he was agreeable; but in the future should he give it to this newcomer, Lewis? So he entered the store, knowing that he could satisfy his thirst and his curiosity at the same time; for in an establishment of this kind one can buy everything that ships and sailormen require, from a glass of whisky or a lime squash to "salt horse," sail-cloth, cables, anchors, and capstan-bars.

At the moment of Pike's entrance, the place was empty of life save for a brown attendant, who was half clerk, half waiter. The captain

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recognized him as the quiet, grass-slippered fellow who had held the same post in the days of Jimmy Watts, and so saluted him with a glare and a nod which did not look as friendly as they were intended to be.

"Scotch and soda," he said, and advanced to the long table at the back of the store.

The room ran straight through from the cobbled square to a cobbled alley, and was feebly lighted at each end by an open doorway. Pike sat down at the table, and glared around at the familiar apartment and the familiar objects with which it was littered and encumbered. Everything looked just as it had a year ago—the kegs of spikes and bolts, the boxes of tobacco, the bags of coffee, the cases of wines and spirits, the coils of yellow rope, and the bales of sail-cloth.

He lifted his glass and sighed profoundly. To the grass-slippered Pedro, the sigh sounded like a muttered oath.

"Good morning, sir. You are Captain Pike, of the Fortune, I think," said some one in low but cordial tones.

The shipmaster turned his head and found an elderly, mild-eyed, gray-bearded man standing at his shoulder.

"My name is Lewis," said the other.

"Lewis?" repeated Pike, glaring.

The merchant smiled, motioned to Pedro, and sat down.

"I will join you, captain, though I take noth-

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ing stronger than ginger ale nowadays," he said, with a pensive note in his quiet voice.

Pike continued to stare. Pedro placed a full glass at his employer's elbow, and retired to the other end of the store. "I know you," said Pike. "Your name is not Lewis."

"Lewis is my name—now," returned the other quietly.

The mariner's big face flamed crimson and his blue eyes wavered.

"Captain Webster!" he exclaimed. "Captain Webster, of the old Huskie!"

The ship-chandler nodded his gray head, at the same time stroking his venerable beard with one trembling hand and fingering his glass of ginger ale with the other.

"True," he said. "But what does it matter? I am glad you have not forgotten your poor old skipper."

Captain Pike glared at the table and breathed heavily through his nose.

"I am sorry!" he growled. "I have felt bad about it these ten years back. I am sorry it happened so—an' more than that a man can't say!"

The other sighed.

"Enough, lad. You did your duty, neither more nor less. You told the truth—and you had been sworn on the Book to tell it. It wasn't your fault that I was drunk in my berth when the old bark went ashore. I lost my certificate—and I got my deserts! I don't hold it against you, lad."

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Captain Pike gulped his liquor, spilling some of it on the table. He was deeply agitated, deeply moved with remorse and pity; and yet, as the other said, he had only done his duty in giving evidence that the commander of the bark was found intoxicated in his cabin at the time of the wreck. Pike himself had been the mate of the Huskie at the time; but the court had pronounced him guiltless of any responsibility for the loss of the ship. The vessel had struck the rocks during the captain's watch, while the boat-swain was on deck, and Pike, who had been on duty for more than twenty hours, was sound asleep in his bunk.

It had happened ten years ago; but Pike had not forgotten a single incident or picture of the wreck and the subsequent trial. He had been sincerely sorry for Captain Webster at the time, and he was still sincerely sorry for him. He glared furiously at the puddle of whisky and water on the table, anxious to tell his old commander how he felt—how he had felt for ten years—but unable to express himself.

The ship-chandler watched with a furtive slant to his gray, still eyes. He did not understand Captain Pike. It was ten years since their last meeting. He could see manifest signs of embarrassment, but no token of pity or sorrow, in the other's big, drooped face.

"Aye, you did your duty," he said wearily. "I was the worse for liquor that night; but it was

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the pain I suffered that drove me to it—the neuralgia. I took the brandy—too much of it—to deaden the pain.”

“I did not know,” replied Pike gruffly. “It was not the first time.”

“True, lad, true. I had to doctor myself with the brandy more than once. I wasn’t fit to be afloat that voyage. I should have been in my bed ashore. A man shouldn’t have to sail a ship when he’s half crazy with pain.”

“That’s right. You weren’t like yourself that voyage; but the court—”

“Don’t let it worry you, captain. I was a fool to speak of it; but you are the only man in this port who knows me—the only man in Pernambuco who knows John Lewis for the fellow who lost his ship and his ticket.”

“But for my evidence—”

“You did your duty.”

Captain Pike got to his feet, shook hands with the ship-chandler, and returned to the *Fortune*.

“Our trade goes to Mr. Lewis,” he said to Dixon, the mate.

III

When Captain Pike was not attending to his ship and the business of owners and charter-party, he gave his mind to his wife and family in the gray north and to the case of old Captain Webster. During his first four days in port, he visited the store frequently. He found the for-

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mer mariner more to his taste now than in the old days. Webster had grown quieter, kinder, and more human. Pike soon realized that he could talk to him more easily than to any other man of his acquaintance, Mr. Dixon not excepted.

It was evident that the ship-chandler felt the same way toward Pike, for he never issued from his dusty office behind the bales and boxes except when the Newfoundlander was the only customer in the store. To the man who had once sailed as mate with John Webster, in the old days before disgrace had found him and changed his name and his career, he spoke freely, though mournfully, of the sea-hunger which still gnawed at his heart.

He admitted that he had prospered ashore; but he said, with equal frankness, that no commercial prosperity could repay him for the loss of his right to navigate the seven seas as a master mariner.

"But I don't hold it against you, lad," he would always say in conclusion. "It wasn't your fault. It was fate."

Pike once asked him why he had come to Pernambuco.

"On the chance of seeing you—and of putting myself right with you," replied the merchant, with his steady, kindly gaze on the other's embarrassed face.

On the morning of the fifth day in port, Cap-

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tain Pike received another letter from his wife. He read it hurriedly in the agent's office, carried it open in his hand from the office to the ship, and there, in his own cabin, reread it again and again. It was a comforting letter; and yet it tugged at his heart-strings.

The children were well; but they asked for him every day, and prayed every night for his speedy return. Little Sandy still persisted in taking the old coat to bed with him. Bill had fought a boy at school—a big boy—who had said that Captain Pike was not the smartest captain sailing out of any port in Newfoundland. Kate was saving up pennies, and going without candy, with the intention of buying a new pipe for him. Tom was painting him a picture of ships and whales.

He blinked his hot blue eyes to clear them of a film of mist. Lord, to think that he was loved like this! What had he ever done to deserve it—to deserve the admiration and love of such a woman as Molly and of such children as these?

He groaned in the bitterness of his longing to see them and hold them in his arms. The tasks, the days, the miles of ocean between now and the time of reunion, between this garish port and Harbor Grace, depressed him, mocked him, wearied him, mind and heart. He paced the hot, low-roofed cabin, puffing furiously at his pipe, crumbling and gripping the letter in his right hand.

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Suddenly a strange desire came to him—a craving to share with another his knowledge of all this wonderful love and longing. He paused in his pacing, stared down for a moment at the crumpled paper in his palm, pocketed it, took up his hat, and hastily left the ship.

Fifteen minutes later Captain Pike and the ship-chandler sat at the long table in the dim store, one with his whisky and soda, the other with his ginger ale. Pike drew his letter from his pocket, and then hid it away again. He would show it and discuss it later. There was plenty of time. Perhaps a couple of drinks would thaw his foolish reserve.

“Pike,” said the merchant, “I want you to come out to my place this evening—to dine and sleep, you know, and have a canter around the country in the cool of the morning.”

“That’s mighty kind of you,” returned Pike; “but I don’t like to stay away from the ship all night. I doubt if Dixon, single-handed, could keep the men aboard. You know how it is in a port like this; an’ every mother’s son of them is crazy to sneak ashore an’ go on a jamboree.”

“I want you to chance it, lad—for old times’ sake,” said the other. “I ask it as a favor. If you are sorry for what happened ten years ago, now is your chance to show it. I want to talk with you, lad, for I am lonely in this place—and in this business. I am not much of a hand at making friends nowadays.”

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"I'll come," said Pike. He pulled the letter from his pocket, and drew the other's attention to it with a gesture that was almost threatening. "Heard from home to-day," he said. "From my wife, you know—and all about the youngsters! It makes me homesick—so homesick I can't keep it to myself! I'm not in the habit of talking about my family, and wouldn't do it now but that you—well, captain, you and I are pretty good friends!"

The older man looked slightly startled for a moment. Then he smiled kindly.

"Homesick!" he murmured. "Wife and children! You have never impressed me as being that kind of a man, Pike. You are so—so confoundedly reserved that I have never suspected you of indulging in feelings of that sort."

Pike drained his glass.

"I have an unfortunate manner," he growled.

The ship-chandler gazed at him intently and inquiringly for several seconds. He sighed and stroked his gray beard.

"Tell me about your wife and children, lad. Unbottle yourself," he said gently.

IV

So Alexander Pike cut loose on that sacred subject for the first time in his life. His blue eyes glared. He read passages from the letter—yes, and from other letters which he wrenched

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furiously from his pocket. He breathed like a tired man working a winch. His husky voice choked in his throat. Sometimes it failed him altogether, and he was silent for minutes at a time.

The old ship-chandler, listening intently, twirled and twirled his glass of ginger ale. His face grew grayer as the other's took on a deeper and yet deeper tone of red. His eyes darkened, turned this way and that, and steadied at last upon the yellowish liquid at his hand. Now and again he moved uneasily in his chair, as if he was about to spring to his feet.

Pike brushed the back of his hand across his glaring blue eyes, mopped his moist brow with his handkerchief, and was silent. The older man, motionless now in his chair, placed an elbow on the table's edge and shaded his eyes with his left hand. Pedro, the grass-slippered clerk and waiter, moved noiselessly here and there in the dusky background.

"I had a wife, too," said the ship-chandler, suddenly yet softly. "But she died—about nine years ago—of shame and heartache and poverty!"

Captain Pike trembled, and glared across the table in pained astonishment. The other man did not look up. He continued to sit there motionless, with one gray hand shading his eyes.

"And I have a child," he continued, his voice, soft but toneless. "She was already married when—when I had my ticket taken away from

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me, ten years ago. Her husband is a seafaring man, and a smart one. He has never lost a ship! He is captain of a big liner now. I was fond of that girl; but I haven't seen her in ten years—nor have I had a spoken or written word from her in all that time.”

The hand before his eyes shook a little, and the other twitched on the table. Pike tried to speak, but his tongue was dry as a chip, and his throat felt as if it were lined with ashes.

“For a while I work around at one job and another,” continued the ship-chandler, “but I didn't know how to do anything but sail a ship. My wife had never been strong, and she couldn't stand privation. I became desperate—and then I was caught with money and a watch in my pocket. But I told my story, and they gave me only six months. The wife died while I was serving my time.”

“Good Lord!” exclaimed Pike, his blue eyes staring, his face of the colorless shade of old sail-cloth.

“It was a long time after that before I began to prosper,” said the old man, still with one gray hand across his eyes and the other twitching on the table. “I wasn't in good health. I learned to clean roads; but all the time I was cleaning roads I was planning to get somewhere to see you—out of that town of dirty streets and disgrace, and away to one of your ports of call. I wanted to see you, Pike—that was about the

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only thing I wanted. After a bit, when my health was better, I shipped before the mast on a Liverpool bark bound for the Argentine. I skipped the ship in the first port, and got a job up country, cooking and dish-washing for an outfit of cattlemen. Yes, Pike, I cooked—cooked stinking messes for a crew of half-breed cow-herders—me, John Webster! But I had lost my pride long ago—that day in court when you gave evidence. I got some money together and started trading. I wasn't always honest; but I made the game pay. I subscribed to a Newfoundland paper, and kept track of you and your ship. I was set on meeting you again, Pike—and here I am!"

"Why?" asked Pike huskily. "It was my evidence that was the ruin of you; but if you had let me know, years ago, I would have helped you. Man, I'd have done anything for you!"

After a moment's silence, the old man said:

"I don't want you to come out to my place to-night."

"What?" exclaimed Pike.

"Don't come," repeated the ship-chandler quietly. "If you do, I'll kill you—as I intended to do when I invited you. I've been dreaming of doing for you these nine years back; but now—well, those letters have saved you. I thought you a monster; but you have a human heart in you, after all!"

He sprang from his chair, reached across the

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table, and gripped Pike by the shoulder. His gray eyes flamed.

“Get out!” he cried. “Confound you, get out! Don’t come here again, or I’ll do for you! Keep out of my sight! I’ve waited nine years—and now I let you go! Go—go—or I’ll do for you yet!”

Captain Pike got heavily to his feet, Molly’s letters clutched in his hand. He glared blindly at the old man, then stumbled from the store and back to his ship.

MR. DOOLEY ON THE PURSUIT OF RICHES

BY F. P. DUNNE

MR. DOOLEY ON THE PURSUIT OF RICHES

BY F. P. DUNNE

“**D**EAR me, I wish I had money,” said Mr. Hennessy.

“So do I,” said Mr. Dooley. “I need it.”

“Ye wudden’t get it fr’m me,” said Mr. Hennessy.

“If I didn’t,” said Mr. Dooley, “’twud be because I was poor or tired. But what d’ye want money f’r? Supposin’ I lost me head an’ handed over all me accumyلاتed wealth? What wud ye do with that gr-reat fortune? Befure ye had spint half iv it, ye’d be so sick ye’d come to me an’ hand me back th’ remainin’ eighteen dollars.

“A man has more fun wishin’ f’r th’ things he hasn’t got thin injyin’ th’ things he has got. Life, Hinnessy, is like a Pullman dinin’ car: a fine bill iv fare, but nawthin’ to eat. Ye go in fresh an’ hungry, tuck ye’er napkin in ye’er collar, an’ square away at th’ list iv groceries that th’ black man hands ye. What’ll ye have first? Ye think ye’d like to be famous an’ ye ordher a dish iv fame an’ bid th’ waither make it good an’ hot. He’s gone an age, an’ whin he comes back ye’er

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appytite is departed. Ye taste th' ordher an' says ye: "Why, it's cold an' full iv broken glass." 'That's th' way we always sarve Fame on this car,' says th' coon. 'Don't ye think ye'd like money f'r th' sicond coorse? Misther Rockyfellar over there has had forty-two helpin's,' says he. 'It don't seem to agree with him,' says ye, 'but ye may bring me some,' ye say. Away he goes an' stays till ye're bald an' ye'er teeth fall out, an' ye set dhrummin' on th' table an' lookin' out at th' scenery. By an' by he comes back with ye'er ordher, but jus' as he's goin' to hand it to ye, Rockyfellar grabs th' plate. 'What kind iv a car is this?' says ye. 'Don't I get annything to eat? Can't ye give me a little happiness?' 'I wudden't ricommend th' happiness,' says th' waither. 'It's canned an' it kilt th' las' man that thried it.' 'Well, gracious,' says ye, 'I've got to have something. Give me a little good health an' I'll thry to make a meal out iv that.' 'Sorry, sir,' says th' black man, 'but we're all out iv good health. Besides,' he says, takin' ye gintly by th' ar-rm, 'we're goin' into th' deepo an' ye'll have to get out,' he says.

"An' there ye ar-re. Ye'll niver get money onless ye fix th' waither an' grab th' dishes away fr'm th' other passengers. An' ye won't do that. So ye'll niver be rich. No poor man iver will be. Wan iv th' sthrangest things about life is that th' poor who need th' money th' most ar-re th' very wans that niver have it. A poor man is a

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poor man an' a rich man is a rich man. Ye're ayether born poor or rich. It don't make anny diff'rence whether or not ye have money to begin with. If ye're born to be rich, ye'll be rich, an' if ye're born to be poor, ye'll be poor. Th' buttons on ye'er vest tell th' story. Rich man, poor man, beggar man, rich man, or wurruds to that effect. I always find that I have ayether two buttons or six.

"A poor man is a man that rayfuses to cash in. Ye don't get annything f'r nawthin', an' to gather in a millyon iv thim beautiful lithographs iv Salmon P. Chase, ye have to go down ivry day with something undher ye-er ar-rm to th' great pawnshop. Whin Hogan wants four dollars, he takes th' clock down to Moses. Whin Rockyfellar wants tin millyon, he puts up his peace iv mind or his health or something akelly valyable. If Hogan wud hock his priceless habit iv sleepin' late in th' mornin', he wud be able to tell th' time iv day whin he got up without goin' to th' corner dhrug store.

"Look at McMullin. He's rowlin' in it. It bulges his pocket an' inflates his convarsation. Whin he looks at me, I always feel that he's won-dhrin' how much I'd bring at a forced sale. Well, McMullin an' I had th' same start, about forty yards behind scratch an' Vanderbilt to beat. They always put th' best man in anny race behind th' line. Before McMullin gets through he'll pass Vanderbilt, carry away th' tape on his

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shouldhers, an' run two or three times around th' thrack. But me an' him started th' same way. Th' on'y diff'rence was that he wud cash in an' I wudden't. Th' on'y thing I iver ixpicted to get money on was me dhream iv avarice. I always had that. I cud dhream iv money as hard as anny man ye iver see an' can still. But I niver thought iv wurrukin' f'r it. I've always looked on it as dishon'rable to wurruk f'r money. I wurruk f'r exercise an' I get what th' lawyers call an honorarium be dilutin' th' spirits. Th' on'y way I iver expict to make a cint is to have it left to me be a rich relation, an' I'm th' pluthycrat iv me fam'ly, or to stub me toe on a gambler's roll or stop a runaway horse f'r Pierpont Morgan. An' th' horse mustn't be runnin' too fast. He must be jus' goin' to stop, on'y Morgan don't know it, havin' fainted. Whin he comes to, he finds me at th' bridle, modestly waitin' f'r him to weep on me bosom. But as f'r scramblin' down town arly in th' mornin' an' buyin' chattel morgedges, I niver thought iv it. I get up at siven o'clock. I wudden't get up at a quarther to siven f'r all th' money I dhream about. I have a lot iv things ar-round here I cud cash in if I cared f'r money. I have th' priceless gift iv laziness. It's made me what I am, an' that's th' very first thing ivry rich man cashes in. Th' millyonaires ye r-read about thryin' to give th' rest iv th' wurruled a good time be runnin' over thim in autymobills all started with a large stock iv indolence which they cashed

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in. Now, whin they cud enjoy it, they can't buy it back. Thin I have me good health. Ye can always get money on that. An' I have me frinds; I rayfuse to cash thim in. I don't know that I cud get much on thim, but if I wanted to be a millyonaire, I'd tuck you an' Hogan an' Donahue undher me ar-rm an' carry ye down to Mose.

"McMullin did cash. He had no more laziness thin me, but he cashed it in befure he was twinty-wan. He cashed in his good health, a large stock iv fam'ly ties, th' affliction if his wife, th' comforts iv home, an' wan frind afther another. Wanst in a while, late in life, he'd thry to redeem a pledge, but he niver cud. They wasn't annything in th' wurruld that McMullin wudden't change f'r th' roly-boly. He cashed in his vote, his pathreetism, his rellijon, his rilitives, an' fin'ly his hair. Ye heerd about him, didn't ye? He's lost ivry hair on his head. They ain't a spear iv vigitation left on him. He's as arid as th' desert iv Sahara. His head looks like an iceberg in th' moonlight. He was in here th' other day, bewailin' his fate. 'It's a gr-reat misfortune, says he. 'What did ye get f'r it?' says I. 'That's th' throuble,' says he. 'Well, don't complain,' says I. 'Think what ye save in barber's bills,' I says, an' he wint away lookin' much cheered up.

"No, Hinmissy, you an' I, me frind, was not cut out be Provydence to be millyionaires. If ye had nawthin' but money, ye'd have nawthin' but money. Ye can't ate it, sleep it, dhrink it, or

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carry it away with ye. Ye've got a lot iv things that McMullin hasn't got. Annybody that goes down to Mose's won't see ye'er peace iv mind hangin' in th' window as an unredeemed pledge. An' annyhow, if ye're really in search iv a fortune, perhaps I cud help ye. Wud a dollar an' a half be anny use to ye?"

"Life is full iv disappointments," said Mr. Hennessy.

"It is," said Mr. Dooley, "if ye feel that way. It's thrue that a good many have thried it an' none have come back f'r a post-gradjate coorse. But still it ain't so bad as a career f'r a young man. Ye niver get what ye ordher, but it's pretty good if ye'er appytite ain't keen an' ye care f'r th' scenery."

EVERETT, COMMISSIONER OF JUSTICE

BY GORDON MacCREAGH

EVERETT, COMMISSIONER OF JUSTICE

BY GORDON MACCREAGH

EVERETT was Commissioner of the Kyauk-Taw Division, lord paramount and supreme authority under the Burma Government over a district as large as Texas and containing five times as many people, of whom quite one hundredth per cent were white.

The Hon. Sir Frederic Everett, C. S. I., was his full title, which was no empty honor of heredity, but a dignity conferred on him for thirteen years of meritorious service.

I was an army chaplain, stationed at Kyauk-Taw with a half battalion of the Irish Fusileers—then. I am a paddy trader now, and very little different from other men.

I had been ordained but recently, and Kyauk-Taw was my first appointment. Everett's was the first marriage that I had consecrated, which was one reason why the big Commissioner and his young wife had made their home a very haven of refuge to me, a stranger in a strange land, bewildered by the amazing candor of the conditions prevailing in that "East of Suez, where the best is

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like the worst, and there ain't no ten commandments."

I had dropped in earlier in the evening, and had been pressed to stay on to dinner, with that charmingly informal hospitality which alleviates to some extent the bitter heartache of Eastern Exile. The conversation had been carried on chiefly by Lady Everett, for I had nothing in common with the social trivialities which engross the energies of the unfortunate women locked away on the outer edge of civilization, and the Commissioner, serious minded at the best of times, toyed through the meal with a troubled frown over his deep set eyes except when he looked up to smile indulgently at his wife's sparkling observations on the life of their little community. He was evidently worrying over his work again.

The cigars came on, and Lady Everett rose to leave us. "Now then, you two," she admonished, with a pretty forefinger raised in exquisite imitation of a stage pose, "don't burn those torches for too long; it's hot enough without."

The Commissioner laughed deep in his chest, and, putting his great hands to her waist, lifted her up to him like a doll and kissed her lightly on the forehead. Then he set her down with the utmost unconsciousness and all unashamed. "All right, Eileen, little woman," he said; "we shan't be long. Run along and play us something!"

She tripped out, and Roy, the huge brindled

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Great Dane, heaved up the whole hundred and eighty pounds of him and padded solemnly after her.

The creases came back into the Commissioner's forehead, a whole network of them, till they filled up even the whole of that wide space, and he thoughtfully lit a big black Burma cheroot and tilted his chair back and puffed steadily like a slow throbbing engine, till the heavy vapor swirled and eddied among the cut glass fruit dishes and silver flower vases in an opaque mist.

The soft notes of the piano began to steal in from the drawing room, mellowed and toned down by their windings round wooden walls and *purda* hangings; few and vague at first, like a Persian nightingale making up its mind, and then in the full ripple and swing of something classic of which I didn't know the name.

The creases in the great man's forehead slowly began to relax, even as when David played before Saul and lifted the shadow from his soul, and I hoped to draw him out of his somber reverie by asking: "What's the trouble, Commissioner Sahib?"

He blew several more furious rings at the ceiling before he left the front legs of his chair down with a crash. "It's that infernal scoundrel Lubain again," he muttered, half to himself. "We've got him, but—"

I sat up and began to take notice. I had be-

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come acquainted with Boh Lu-Bain, the dacoit chief, already; or rather, with his doings, in a particularly horrible manner; for I had performed the last rites, over an unfortunate man of the regiment whom he had caught, and, with a diabolical conception of humor, put to death by crucifixion.

"But as usual," continued the Commissioner gloomily, "we have nothing that we can convict him on. He's such an infernally cunning devil, and he has the villagers so terrified of him and his awful vengeance that we can never get a shred of evidence against him. He comes up for trial to-morrow, and though we are all morally positive that he's at the head of the gang, I can't see how I can possibly do more than give him a footling little sentence of a couple of weeks on some minor charge, and by stretching the code at that." He threw out his hands with a gesture of despair. "You know how it is."

I knew British justice, as administered to an overpampered native populace, while not always based on an accurate understanding of their character or needs, is as the law of the Medes and Persians that changeth not; and even a Commissioner can't hold a man in confinement except under the prescribed procedure of law and order.

"This makes the twelfth time that I've had him before me," continued the Commissioner darkly. "And I know, I'm just positive, that I'll have to

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let him go—it will come to thirteen, and that will be the last.” He gave a short, grim laugh. “Now there’s a sane admission for the Commissioner to make. If I told the doctor, he’d give me a pound of pills and tell me that I needed immediate leave for six months—but there, don’t let me weary you with my administrative troubles, Padre Sahib. Go along in and talk to the Mem-sahib a while; I have a few notes to make, and then I’ll join you.”

Lady Eileen was playing softly in the dark in one of her dreamy moods, and I crept in silently without disturbing her. She just nodded to me and went on improvising with a touch so light that some of the notes were scarcely audible. The effect of the whole was inexpressibly soothing, and I selected the coolest spot under the swaying *punka* fan and leant back with a sigh of perfect contentment—soft music and dim lights are an important factor in the ritual which some denominations, in their craving for radical change, have unfortunately lost sight of. I began to fall into a reverie, and I could not help thinking that Eileen Everett, with her power of musical expression, would have made a grand organist. She sat now, dressed in something that shimmered white and cool through the gloom, and poured her soul out over the keys, dim lit by a reflection from the blazing moon striking mirror-wise from the glass surface of a picture by Asti. It was entitled “Innocence,” I remember, though it

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looked like anything but innocence to me; but, then, I had not been brought up to an æsthetic appreciation of art. The half light melted in a luminous halo over her head and shoulders, for all the world like the picture of Saint Cecilia at the organ, while from the darkness under the piano Roy's watchful eyes flared and blinked phosphorescent at me. Presently the improvisation drifted imperceptibly into the wailing rhythm of the "Feuer Zauber" from Die Walkure, gliding smoothly through the wonderful variations of the motif and its heartbreaking repetitions in the minor chords with all the inconsolable longing and hopeless renunciation of the super-soul condemned to a life of material things; if anybody could ever make the piano talk, it was Eileen Everett; the instrument was sobbing now, crying out something of the tragedy of her own sudden transplantation from a life of cultured refinement to the middle of the jungle, where every amusement she had ever taken pleasure in and every pastime she had ever loved were utterly lost to her; then it faltered, like a catch in a human voice, struggled to regain control of itself, and died out in a few last fainting notes, while the halo-lit hair bowed brokenly over the keys.

Then Lady Eileen rose abruptly and came over to where I sat with a catch in my own throat. I could feel her agitation. Her hand fell lightly on the back of my chair, and I could feel again that she was going to say something, when sud-

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denly the whole emotional atmosphere was shattered and we were both startled out of our gloomy reflections by the loud preliminary thrill and fierce call of a great warty wall gecko somewhere up in the rafters.

"Tr-r-r-r. Tr-r-r. Tuck-too. Tuck-too," the thing repeated with eerie menace out of the dark.

"Five. Six. Seven." Lady Eileen counted. "It will be thirteen; listen."

Thirteen it was. The loathsome thing completed its prescribed outcry and rounded it off with a long, sepulchral croak.

Lady Eileen drew herself up with a shiver and shuddered back out of her mournful fantasy to a practical realization of conditions as they existed. "How I hate that *tucktoo*," she said. "It gives me the creeps; it always shouts just thirteen times."

"Superstitious?" I asked awkwardly, collecting my thoughts with difficulty out of their recent agitation.

"No, not superstitious; but they sound so uncanny in the dark that I almost believe the Burman superstition about when one of them haunts your house and calls always the same number of times, it means some great event in your life in just so many days, or weeks, or months."

"Oh, well," I laughed to reassure her. "This one is celebrating the thirteenth year of your

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husband's service and his new honors at the hands of the government."

"Yes, but Taw-gyi says that only the threes and sevens are lucky out of the odd numbers; thirteen, of course, is bad; so I told him to get a bamboo and poke the horrid thing out; but he can never find it."

This gloomy foreboding was very unlike Lady Eileen's usual sunny nature, and I was about to try and show her the childishness of these fancies. She saw through my motive in an instant, and I know that she smiled in the dark. Then she said very gently, "I wish you would go and talk to Fred and try and get him away from worrying about his work—and you might call to one of the *lugales* to light the lamps."

Just then, "Coming right along, little woman," boomed the Commissioner's voice from the end of the passage. "I haven't found any solution out of the difficulty yet, but I give it up as hopeless for the present."

Later, as we stood at the gate while the Commissioner's resplendently uniformed *chaprassi* was lighting a lantern with which to precede me on the way to my own bungalow on account of the big black scorpions which hunt their prey through the early hours of the night, he remarked thoughtfully: "Listen, Padre Sahib, I wish you would drop in to the court house to-morrow and have a look at this Lu-Bain; I'd like to know just how he strikes you." I promised, and went

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home to a restless night of heart-sickness and *heimweh*.

The Commissioner was already at his desk when I entered the court room next morning. He nodded to me and gave an order to a gorgeous orderly to place a chair for me by his side.

"You're early, Padre," he remarked. "There are two or three little cases to come yet. Have a cheroot."

Official red tape is incongruously informal sometimes in a district court at the end of the world. I selected a *Trichi* and leant back to watch the faces around me, a study which has always fascinated me. A few petty cases came up; a boundary dispute, and an old crone who had suffocated her son because he had been bitten by a mad dog, and the local witch doctor had pronounced the case as hopeless. Petty, that is, for that district; no white men had been involved, and they were accordingly quickly disposed of. Then the *babu* clerk of the court announced: "The crown versus Lu-Bain."

A pair of native constables ushered in a grotesque figure of a man, dressed, or rather undressed, only in a tightly-wound loin cloth which showed a knotted pair of legs entirely covered with intricate designs in dark blue tattooing from the knee up as a charm to ensure courage. At the bar, or railed-in platform, where prisoners took their stand, the creature put up a sudden

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resistance, winding his abnormally long and massive arms round his two conductors like Samson about to destroy the twain pillars, and cursing them with unthinkable indecency. For a few moments he whirled them about like straw dummies, then others rushed to their assistance, and with their combined efforts boosted him up into the cage.

The Commissioner was drumming a tune with a pencil against his teeth while he watched the whole proceeding with his forehead tied into knots. "Cheerful beast, isn't he, Padre?" he muttered without taking his eyes off him. "It's funny; he always does that, I mean, tears his clothes off. Whenever he's caught and shoved into a cell, some queer instinct of the caged animal crops out and impels him to return to primal nakedness. What d'you think of him?"

The prisoner crouched over the rail and glowered gorilloid hate from deep sunk eyes shadowed by a mat of coarse hair, for all the world like some wild beast glaring from a cave. I felt sure that if he could have got at us he would have bitten us with long yellow teeth; and while the thought was in my mind my heart went cold, as he suddenly made as though to climb over the rail; but the prick of a bayonet thrust up against his great chest by one of the guards below restrained him, and he snarled appalling promises of what he would do to that man personally and to his whole family later. "And not so very much

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later, thou dog's dog," he added with hissing menace; "for I cannot be held; there is no evidence."

"Good heavens!" I turned to the Commissioner. "God forgive me for saying it; but I would convict that man for a thousand years on his appearance alone."

Sir Frederic smiled wearily. "I wish the law were as elastic as your conscience," he said briefly. Then he signed for the case to proceed.

The creature was right. There was no evidence. A plethoric *Chetty*, or money lender from Madras, who had committed the indiscretion of applying the screws a little too tight on some Burman who turned out to have influence, or possibly connections, with the dacoit gang, had been suddenly swooped down upon one night and hacked to pieces—literally; after which the village had been set fire to in a spirit of wanton sport. A villager had been found who had been foolish enough to admit that he had personally seen some of the gang; and then the police had been foolish enough to let him out of their sight with a notification that he was to hold himself to give evidence when called upon. The evidence had since died—of snake bite. It was an unfortunate coincidence, very much to be regretted, but that was all. Out of a village of nearly three hundred inhabitants not one other living soul could be found who had any knowledge of the affair at all. Quite two-thirds had been ab-

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sent on a hundred and one futile errands when the thing occurred; some had even slept through the fracas; and one man, with a gash on his leg, recounted with much picturesque detail how he had met a wild boar in the jungle; but not one had seen anything of any sort of dacoit.

As all this was tediously brought out with all the circumstances and formality of law, the great savage in the cage began to bare his gums and emit chuckling noises like a delighted ape, grinning gargoyle truculence at the Commissioner as the latter briefly and regretfully summed up his admission that there was no evidence on which the prisoner could be convicted. "But," he continued; "I sentence you to one month's imprisonment with hard labor in the chain gang for attacking two officials in this court."

The dacoit's amazed rage was awful to behold, and fascinating in its ferocity. Repulsive as the man was in his mirth, the sudden reversion sheer back to primeval anthropoidism was more startling than any Jekyll-Hyde transformation. The prominent brows came down in a single overhung line, the prognathous jaw shot yet further forward and displayed great yellow fangs with abnormally developed incisors, the high set ears twitched like an enraged gorilla's, and he chattered speechless rage at the Commissioner. Then, all unexpectedly, with the quickness of a jungle primate, he leaned over the rail, wrenched loose

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the bayonet from the constable's rifle below him, and hurled it straight at Sir Frederic. Had it been one of the heavy-bladed knives of his own people, nothing could have saved its intended mark, so swift had been the whole action; but old-fashioned, three-cornered bayonets are not suitably balanced for throwing, and the weapon turned in its course, flew low, and smashed a great slice from the top of the desk with the force of its impact.

The Commissioner laughed outright with the happiness of a boy. "Good," he exclaimed. "I can give him nearly six months more for that." And he added meaningly, looking at me through narrowed eyelids: "And here endeth the twelfth lesson. Eh, Padre?"

Half a year passed in comparative quiet and without any particularly notable events. There was some trifling disaffection among the hill tribes, and the cholera, which seemed to have forgotten Kyauk-Taw for nearly three years, paid us a flying visit; nothing very serious, the daily toll never rose above five or six; but it meant a great deal of nerve-wracking work for me, and I was glad when the remnant of my "soldiers" was transferred up to Maymyo in the hills to recuperate, and a detachment of the Welsh Borderers was sent to expiate its sins at Kyauk-Taw. The worst part of the hot weather was over, and we were beginning to look forward

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to the comparative coolness of the monsoon rains. The Commissioner commenced to make preparations to go on circuit, visiting outlying districts with an imposing and wholly superfluous retinue of personal attendants, and servants, and riding elephants, and *babu* assistants, and camp clerks, and a whole elephant load of office paraphernalia.

"Better come along with me for a couple of weeks, Padre," he suggested. "You're looking pretty well knocked out, and a little trip will do you good. Eileen is coming with me, and I'll be glad of the excuse to make leisure to show you both some good shooting."

It did not take much persuasion to induce me to make up my mind, and a week later found me enjoying my first experience of jungle life under the most favorable conditions in the world, that is, in all the luxury of a Commissioner's camp. It was by no means all tenting, as I had at first expected; in fact, it was the other way round, for the Government has erected commodious circuit houses, or glorified *dak-bungalows*, in all the more important centres fitted up with serviceable furniture, where the Commissioner, or any other Government official on tour can spend a couple of weeks in the utmost comfort.

On the third day, at Mawbyu, Eileen Everett appeared at the breakfast table with a dissatisfied pout most becomingly pursing up her pretty lips.

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"What's the trouble, little woman?" asked the Commissioner.

"The commissariat department," she replied pointedly. "Do you men realize that we've eaten nothing but scrawny fowls for the last ten days? And the fowls of Mawbyu are the scrawniest, long-leggedest, toughest, bald-headedest old game cocks in the whole of Upper Burma."

Everybody who has lived in the Orient knows that chicken is found on the menu too often to be considered a delicacy, and to those especially who have traveled, *duk-bungalow* chickens, which constitute the only fresh meat supply, are a synonym for hoary antiquity. In Mawbyu particularly, the indigenous race of near *emus* were such indiscriminately bred mongrels that they commanded the amazing market price of eight for one rupee, which would mean about twenty-four for a healthy American dollar. There was a place three-days' march further on where their owners were only too glad to give away sixteen of them for a rupee; but only the lesser officials of the Government were compelled to journey into that wilderness; the Commissioner and all his greater satellites shunned it.

"It's no use laughing at me, Fred; they are," Lady Eileen continued. "Even Roy won't eat them. And as for me, I've eaten so much *moorgie* in the last few days that the feathers are beginning to grow out of me."

The Commissioner made a fatuously fond re-

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mark about angels; but his wife was not to be mollified.

She continued tyrannically: "Now I don't care what work you have on hand to-day, or whom you intend to sentence to lifelong slavery; you'd better let them all off; and then you two men go away out into the jungles, and don't let me see your faces again till you've got a deer or something."

"Your ladyship's wish is a command," the Commissioner acquiesced happily. "And a little diversion won't do us any harm. What do you say, Padre? Wouldn't you like to come with us, Eileen, my dear, won't you be lonely?"

"I shan't have one minute's time to be lonely; I'm going to spend the whole afternoon on a hunt of my own. There's a horrid great *tucktoo* in this *dak-bungalow*, too, and I'm going to get the *durwan* and make him poke a stick into every hole and cranny in the house. I believe it's our own evil genius come with us," she added with impressive awe. "It's got the same sore throat, and it sings just the same number of times."

"Yes, it's funny, I noticed that, too," the Commissioner agreed. "Well, I hope you get him, for if we're unsuccessful, he can't be worse than *moorgie*."

"Ee-eh, fee-ee-ch! you horrid thing!—no, now let me down"—she struggled like a fluffy kitten—"I won't let you now, just for that."

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A little while later we rode out of the compound followed by a small army of servants and hangers-on to act as beaters, and, hopefully, bearers of the spoil.

Lady Eileen looked out of a window and threw her husband the kiss she had denied him before. To this day the perfect picture she made of girlish light-heartedness framed in the brown teak casement comes back and wakes me out of my dreams.

"It's a good omen," laughed the Commissioner joyously. "We'll get a good bag."

It seemed that he was right. We had hardly been out an hour, when one of the men hit on a fresh trail of a young barking deer—"which, personally, I consider the best eating of any," said the Commissioner. The trail led direct to a heavy bamboo *tope*, in which the wary animal was in all probability lying up during the heat of the afternoon. We took up our stations about a hundred yards apart at one side, while the beaters went in at the other, and set up a diabolical pandemonium. In a few minutes a swiftly graceful little russet creature broke cover almost at my feet, and dashed away in a series of tremendous leaps. I, of course, missed it with both barrels, and fell over backwards in the attempt. The Commissioner whooped like an Indian, and snatched his rifle from the gun-bearer behind him—it was too far out of shotgun range for him—then, watching his chance as the lithe

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little beast bounded between the high tussocks, he brought it down with a beautiful long shot.

"Wiped your eye for you, Padre. Oh, shame!" he sang out as he snapped open the breech and blew down the barrel.

Then, from apparently nowhere came a lean-lipped, muscular little *taxw lu*, or jungle man, dressed in some beautiful tattooing and a light silk sash, into which was thrust the inevitable razor-edged *dah*, and timidly unfolded a tale of a big gaur, a lone bull, which was possessed of an evil spirit, and lay up, malignantly watchful, in a marsh, from which it issued at intervals to trample and gore his people; there were already seven deaths to its credit, therefore would the lord of the universe, by whose favor they all lived, condescend to issue an order to that evil spirit to curb its resentment against the defenceless tree dwellers?

"How far is this place?" asked the Commissioner, with the quick lust of the big game hunter creeping into his face.

"Not so far, O great one," replied the jungle man. And he added with expressive pantomime: "*Nwe alon gyi, a gOUNG gyi gyi*—a mighty bull with vast horns."

It was enough. "We're in luck, Padre," chuckled the Commissioner, already whispering, as though he were even now creeping on his quarry.

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What appeared to be, "not so far," to the iron-hard, tireless jungle man turned out to be a good four hours' ride before the ground began to turn soggy and the horses' hooves squelched in hidden water springing from under the solid looking turf. We dismounted, and the man loped ahead, winding in and out among a maze of slimy pools and cane clumps, pausing every now and then to peer, and listen, and enjoin silence on us, and gliding off on cautious little excursions of his own, till it seemed that we had traversed every foot of that swamp; and the Commissioner's fever of impatience, strung on the edge of expectancy, began to get on his nerves; then the jungle man melted away into the undergrowth on a final excursion, and left us waiting—and waiting.

Sir Frederic was ever a man of few words. He waited ten minutes—fifteen; and then got up and began to circle round, examining the ground. Presently he beckoned to me and pointed to deep-trodden tracks in the soft earth. For a moment I thrilled; but a second glance made it clear even to me that these were no buffalo tracks, but the clean stamped heel and toe of heavy boots. They were our own; we had passed through that identical spot before. The Commissioner looked at me, and I saw what was in his mind as clearly as if he had spoken. "Why?" was all he said.

I was astounded; then an illuminating idea

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came to me, and I hazarded: "It seems to me that he was fearful of facing the lord of creation's anger when he should realize his disappointment after all this trouble, and so he simply ran away while the running was good."

The Commissioner's face cleared, and he grinned grudging admiration for the man's primitive cunning, while he swore softly under his breath; and I, all bemired and weary as I was after the long chase, did not find my conscience rise up and assail me for letting it pass unreprieved. We found our way back to the horses with difficulty through the bewildering tangle, and the short twilight of the tropics overtook us long before we had covered half the distance home. We cantered along for an hour in silence, which was suddenly broken by the Commissioner, apropos of nothing. "But still," he objected reflectively, "I didn't see a single buffalo track all the while." I didn't know enough about the matter of trails and tracks to venture an opinion of any sort; but it was evident to me that the thing was weighing on his mind with vague uneasiness.

A little later a family of silver pheasants whizzed up from right beneath our horses' feet and rocketed off straight ahead. While I was still recovering from the sudden start at the astonishing racket of their wings and their frightened cackle, coming, as it did, out of the half dark, the Commissioner quickly lifted his rifle

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and fired, and then a second time. One of the hurtling embodiments of compact energy flew into a shapeless mass of feathers, like a shell exploding in the air, and came down with a thud.

It was a wonderful shot for the failing light and on horseback, and with a rifle at that; and I could see that the Commissioner was secretly pleased at his skill. The circumstance dispelled the gloom that had been hanging over him for the last hour. "Very much better than *moorgie*," he chuckled, as he picked up the bird; and he chatted gaily about instances of what he called his lucky shots for the rest of the way home.

It was quite dark when we came to the little clearing which the circuit house occupied all by itself, built with especial design to be away from the noise and smells of the village bazaar.

"No lights yet," observed the Commissioner. "I'll bet Eileen is sitting dreaming in the dark; she'd like to carry a piano round the district with her." He raised his hand to his mouth and halloed as if he were back in his own home shire riding to the hounds—"Wonder whether they've brought in that deer yet? I'll race you to the gate, Padre. Come on."

The gate was open, and as his horse swerved over to take the turn, it suddenly stood up on its hind legs and pawed the air. Then it came down sideways and braced itself with its fore feet wide apart, snorting and trembling. "What

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the devil!" I heard the Commissioner growl, as I rode up, and he backed his horse, which responded willingly enough. He lit a match and tried to discern by its feeble flicker what was the cause of the animal's alarm; he knew that it would never jib like that unless there was something untoward in the way; a snake, maybe. But a match, of course, was futile. Then, "*Durwan!*" he called. "*Hlin hta leik, meik te lu*—bring a light, fool!"

No answering glimmer appeared in the row of darkly outlined servants' quarters grouped together at one end of the compound. He called again; and all the uneasy menace of the afternoon crowded swiftly back into his voice with multiplied intensity. Still no reply. Then the Commissioner threw all caution to the winds, and swung his great bulk off his horse with astonishing speed for a man of his size, and started for the house at a run.

Just beyond the gateway he stumbled over something and fell, and I heard him curse in the dark, thereby betraying the agitation of his mind, for he was a man of clean speech habitually. He struck a little bunch of matches all at once, just as I joined him.

Right in the pathway lay a tattooed man, with his throat torn bodily out.

"God of heaven!" muttered the Commissioner. "What's this about?"

A few paces further was another dark object.

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It was Roy, the great dane, literally hacked to pieces, with the insensate fury that Burmans display when the blood lust comes upon them. In the jaws of the severed head was still clutched a horrible mass of bloody, sinewy flesh.

I remember now that I couldn't realize at the time what had happened. Death, yes; but what did it mean? The Commissioner looked without moving a muscle till the matches burned his fingers; and still he looked, while his hand twitched with the pain that his brain did not yet realize.

"Look out," I warned him, as ingenuously as if such warnings were in the natural order of things. "Your fingers are burning."

Then he woke up, and turned and raced for the house.

He made, of course, for the room his wife had occupied, and I heard him strike match after match to obtain a light. I stayed in the veranda to light the big hanging kerosene lamp; but, as is always the case when one is in a frenzy of haste, the wick would not light—or perhaps it was my trembling fingers that were at fault. As I fumbled with the mechanism, more and more hopelessly, I became dimly aware of the Commissioner's voice from the other room, methodically reiterative. It flashed through my mind with a feeling of relief that it must be alright, as he was talking to her; and then some of the words

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which finally impressed themselves on my brain made me drop the matches I held all over the floor.

He was cursing God!

I rushed in, horrified, and laid a hand on his arm. He did not even seem to be conscious of my presence; but stood incongruously lighting a cigar, while between the puffs, and flares of the match, he blasphemed his Maker with dull insistence.

The thing staggered me. There was something terrifying about the spectacle of this big, fine looking man, all unconsciously performing an act of everyday habit while he stood and deliberately denounced his God.

Then my eyes found time to look round. And I, the man of God, found no rebuke for him.

It was horrible! Unthinkable! There was nothing left to recognize. During even my short experience in that country I had become inured to sights that would shock my stay-at-home brethren to nausea; but I think I must have fainted, or gone into some sort of delirium; for the next thing I remember was that I was sitting in the veranda with my head bowed over the table while an awful red nightmare raced through my brain. The big lamp was lit, and the Commissioner was walking up and down with his hands behind his back muttering to himself. Raving, I thought at first, but his words were

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perfectly coherent; only the creases in his forehead had knotted together in a great irregular V, beginning from the root of his nose and extending out high over the eyebrows, a thing I had never seen before, and it imparted a peculiarly Satanic expression to his face which was chilling in its remorselessness.

Presently he turned to me. "*Now* you know why," he shot out.

I understood that he referred to the jungle man. "You—you mean it was a trap—to detain us," I stammered, I found I could not control my voice. "But why—Who? It couldn't be—"

"Lu Bain was let out two weeks ago," rumbled the Commissioner impressively. Then his calm deliberation exploded into sudden fury. "But, my God, what can I do?" he raved. "If I were to catch him to-morrow, I would have not a shred of evidence to connect him with this. What can I do—in accordance with the law? Oh, curse the law!" He fell to striding up and down once more, knotting his powerful hands together behind his back as though physically to get a grip on himself again.

As he walked, there came a familiar whirr and thrill from the rafters and the baleful croak of, "Tucktoo, Tucktoo."

The Commissioner halted and swung his head rhythmically to each count; then he looked up with his face twisted into a grim smile and

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nodded, as though to an old friend. "All right, old man," he said. Then to me, slowly. "And here beginneth the thirteen lesson, Padre. What?" Then with another change of manner, "Now you go off to bed, and sleep—if you can," he ordered. "You must start on a long journey back to-morrow."

I did not go back on the following day. Instead, I wired my bishop at Rangoon, giving him the briefest resume of the case, and said that, with his approval, I proposed to stay by the Commissioner for a while. To tell the truth, I am afraid I intimated that I would stay whether he approved or no. The Commissioner raised objections, but feebly and finally acquiesced by the simple process of ceasing to insist; and I am convinced that he was only too glad of my company, though he but seldom availed himself of it by conversation. In fact, I don't think he addressed a hundred words to me during the whole of that period. He had fallen into a terrible silence, and went feverishly about his work with a face that frightened his camp clerks into palsy.

The Government offered to derange its mechanism to the extent of giving him an immediate transfer to another district so that he might be spared the constant reminder of his tragedy—even the British Government in Burma can show glimpses of human sentiment on occasion. But the Commissioner promptly refused, and in di-

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rect contravention, stayed just where he was, sending to Kyauk-Taw for the necessary documents to carry on his administrative work from Mawbyu, like a stricken bird that haunts its rifled nest.

Those were gloomy days that followed. The heavy rain clouds gathering for the monsoon hung close over the cracked earth like a patternless dark gray blanket, and the heat shut in below was terrific. The Commissioner lived through it all uncomplainingly, deadly silent and brooding, with the brand of the great V perpetually stamped on his forehead. He would take his rifle and go for long walks in the jungle, staying away for a whole day at a time; but he never seemed to shoot anything, and to my enquiries, replied shortly, "I didn't see anything that I wanted to shoot." I began to wonder what sort of game he felt inclined to shoot, and pondered long on what excuse I could make to bring the doctor up to Mawbyu. He never took any food out with him on these expeditions, and only played with the meal that was set before him on his return, till he began to grow gaunt and wolfish looking. I had finally determined to take a leaf out of the book of some of my soldier friends and put into practice some of the cunning schemes for getting on the sick list which they were so fertile in evolving; and then the finale came, with the crash of thunder and the booming roar of a six months' accumulated deluge, as though

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Nature herself were taking a hand in staging a dramatic finish.

The long prayed for monsoon broke over the parched land with the sustained fury of rain that only the monsoon can display. For hours the scorched earth simply drank in the inundation, and then, as the cracks and fissures filled up, the water began to collect inches deep in every depression, and the dry water courses that had been just sandy ravines became surging murky floods with great trees and the yearly toll of cattle taken by surprise racing down between their crumbling banks.

The Commissioner had been away since early morning, and when night came and he still had not shown up, I began to fear that he had been cut off by just such a swollen stream, and was doomed to spend several days in such outlying villages as he might come across. I sat up till midnight, and was just on the point of retiring when I heard him come stumbling in with the water squelching in his boots, and grope his way to his room. I jumped up and went into him, but he did not notice me at all. He was cramming rifle cartridges into his pockets, as many as they would hold, the while he whined with suppressed eagerness like a hound on the trail; and the only coherent words I could distinguish were, "At last, my God. At last!" Then he brushed me aside and rushed out again.

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It took me some time to collect my wits before I realized that something was very much amiss with him, and that my duty was to remain near him at all costs. I snatched up a raincoat, or waterproof, as we called them, and hurried out after him. His dark figure was just distinguishable, striding, or rather running, out at the gate. I ran after, and came up with him just at the edge of the clearing and caught him by the sleeve. He turned and seemed to recognize me for the first time; then he shook my arm off and, "Go back home," he ordered me like a dog, and crashed on into the jungle.

The black streaming night and the forbidding jungle appalled me, and for a moment I hung back; then, I am glad to say, my manhood came back to me, and I followed on, bleating after him and calling him by name; but he took no notice, if indeed he heard me above the roar of the rain on the leaves and the incessant roll of the thunder.

He set a frightful pace, stumbling, slipping, and crashing through the undergrowth regardless of injury from thorns and flying twigs. I was in no shape to emulate this big bull of a man, and the strain was killing me. Once he tripped over something and fell with a heavy splash, at last giving me an opportunity to catch up with him. I helped him to his feet and tried to reason with him. "Everett," I begged, "What's the

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matter? Where are you going? You'd better come home with me." He looked at me vaguely. "What? Are *you* still here?" was all he said, and he lurched on again. I shamelessly caught hold of the tail of his shooting jacket and allowed myself to be half led, half dragged through or over all obstacles.

At last he stopped abruptly, and I thanked God for the respite. In front of me I could hear above all the other pandemonium the roar of a stream; and peering through the leaves, I saw on the other side the fitful flicker of a fire under some sort of shelter. The Commissioner seemed tireless, and fell to striding up and down. As for me, I sank to the ground so utterly exhausted that I must have fallen asleep in spite of the discomfort of my soaking clothes, for it was quite light when I opened my eyes, and saw the Commissioner, sitting on a fallen stump, all traces of the night's excitement gone, and methodically picking the plastered leaves and dirt from his rifle mechanism.

"Look across there," he said with grim triumph as soon as he saw that I was awake. "Mine! Delivered bound into my hands!"

I looked, and saw his meaning in a flash.

The stream at this point ran along the edge of a precipitous cliff, and right opposite the spot where I lay there had been at some period in the remote past a great landslide, which had left a

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semicircular hollow with a shelving sandy floor about a hundred feet across. In this enclosed cup was a group of men, trying to induce their fire to burn up. They had evidently crossed the little trickling stream on the previous day, having selected the place as a nice sheltered spot to camp in, and were now shut in by a raging torrent that an elephant could not have crossed.

I heard a low chuckle at my shoulder, and turned and saw the Commissioner surveying the trap with Satanic amusement. Then he stood up and stepped out into the open.

There was a shout of surprise from the men on the other side, and an aimless running to seize their weapons. The Commissioner nodded his head slowly with grim gloating; then he put his hands to his mouth and called across: "So. We meet again, for the thirteenth time, Lu-Bain, Boh of dacoits."

The chief glared at him apewise from under his hand, and then suddenly whipped his silver studded rifle to his shoulder. I felt a sharp swish past my ear, followed by the inconceivable racket that a bullet makes traveling through leaves and small twigs.

The Commissioner leapt behind the fallen tree again, dragging me with him. "It is well," he called mockingly. "Thee I reserve for the last, Boh Lu-Bain."

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He chuckled diabolically again, and began emptying his pockets of cartridges. "Just thirty," he muttered. "And there are twenty-seven of them. It is enough."

And I, who had dedicated my life to preach peace and good will among men, lay by his side and made no effort to restrain him.

What followed was like a chapter out of the "Inferno," only accentuated by pattering rain instead of crackling hell fire. The trapped miscreants ran hither and thither in wild attempts to find cover, of which there was none. They sought shelter behind the most meager piles of camp outfit; they tried to burrow into the sand; then some frenzied brute set an example of hideous selfishness, and they all tried to hide behind each other, the stronger holding the weaker, struggling and yelling, between themselves and the pitiless death that came from across the water.

The Commissioner fired leisurely, playing with his victims like a cat with a mouse; all time was before him, the flood would not go down for a couple of days at least. His excitement began to rise as the lust of his vengeance came upon him, and he shouted biting taunts at the terrified wretches between each shot.

Finally with the courage of desperation some of the less cowardly ruffians collected their wits sufficiently to build barricades of their own dead and return the Commissioner's fire.

"Get under cover there," he snarled at me

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savagely, quite oblivious of the fact that half his own body was exposed over the log.

As he spoke something must have hit him, for he straightened up with a jerk and sank down looking serious, and shortly he began to cough spasmodically. I asked him if he were hurt, but he made no reply; and I noticed that he wasted no time now, but settled down to business, firing with deadly accuracy at every chance.

I watched the whole proceeding in a sort of horrified stupor.

At last it was all over. All except the Boh, who leapt up and down on all fours on the sand like an enraged gorilla and howled. The Commissioner rose to his feet and stepped forward, stiffly, but with a smile of relentless triumph twisted into his face.

"It is met, Boh Lu-Bain," he called. "At last it is met, thou and I, to the death."

And in that instant the Boh fired. How, and by what amazing miracle he accomplished it, I don't know. His rifle had been lying on the sand several yards away from him; but with an enormous ape leap he reached it and snatched it up before the Commissioner could bring his own to his shoulder.

The big man crumpled up into a muddy puddle; and the dacoit leapt high in the air and yelled like a devil out of the pit.

I rushed out to drag the Commissioner under

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cover, but I found his great weight almost beyond the limit of my strength. It took terrifyingly long to get him behind the log once more, and I sweated chilly drops with the momentary expectation of a numbing blow crashing through my spine. When I was finally able to look round I saw that the dacoit chief was hurriedly scaling the precipice at the back, clinging to the sheer cliff face.

I did what I could for my poor friend; but I knew nothing of surgery. I knelt and wrung my hands with ineffectual futility.

Presently he opened his eyes wearily, and his first question showed me that his mind was fixed with deadly intensity on his enemy.

I pointed high up the cliff.

"At least five minutes before he reaches the top," muttered the Commissioner, and he closed his eyes again and lay back breathing heavily. I sensed that he was collecting all his fast waning forces for a final supreme effort.

In a short while, "Bring my rifle," he ordered.

I brought it. My heart was bursting with grief and anguish—and hate.

"Lift me up, Padre," was the next command, weak, but resolute.

And I, the ordained priest, obeyed.

The old hunter aimed long and carefully. The Boh was very nearly at the top. Then the limp muscles stiffened to rock steadiness, and slowly

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the long forefinger pressed on the trigger without a tremor.

The figure remained spread-eagled against the cliff for an interminable time, and my heart pulse ceased as I thought that the dying man's last shot had missed; then, very slowly, the knees began to sag, lower and lower; the figure swayed gently away from the cliff, and then hurtled down with a sickening rush.

And with it Sir Frederic Everett, Commissioner of Justice, fell back into my arms; and I saw that the brand of the great V had disappeared at last from his forehead, and the smile on his face was one of peace.

The last act in the tragedy of Eileen Everett was finished—and I, a priest of God, had played my part in it. But thank God, I did have the honesty to give up the vocation for which I was manifestly unfitted, and retire from the church.

But how could it have been at all possible, you may well ask, that a man in holy orders could so woefully forget his sacred oaths.

Maybe it was strange. But then, you see, Eileen was my little sister.

THE POLITE HORSE

BY HENRY BEACH NEEDHAM

THE POLITE HORSE

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Oh! Ascot Heath's a pleasant spot
All on a Gold-Cup day;
You'd have your work cut out, I wot,
To find a scene so gay. . . .

You try your fortune in The Ring;
Mostlike you have to pay.
No matter! Still a fling's a fling
On Ascot Gold-Cup day.—TRUTH.

JIMMIE HATTON was desperately homesick. His home, or what had been his home, was in Brooklyn, and in that section of the far-flung borough distinguished as Flatbush. He was domiciled in London. After his bacon and eggs and coffee of a morning, two minutes' walk brought him to the hub of the universe—Piccadilly Circus.

For Brooklyn thoroughfares, therefore, Jimmie Hatton had substituted on his neighborhood map high-sounding streets like Duke, Regent, Jermyn—where he lived—and Piccadilly. But a public highway by a less flossy name—Flatbush Avenue—may sound as sweet, even sweeter. Yes, Jimmie was all-fired homesick.

The distance from Piccadilly to New York is considerably greater than from Flatbush to London. From Jimmie's point of view this distance

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New Yorkward was not linear or nautical, but monetary.

In language more forlorn, he was far from home, and he was broke. Not dead broke—worse than that!

Across from his “digs,” as he called his rooms, was the headquarters of the organization which found a way for stranded Americans to navigate the Atlantic westward. But what to many an unhappy soul was God’s lend-a-hand society, was to Jimmie Hatton nothing less than a scourge. Several times he had vowed to change his abode, all on account of this reminder of home and of King’s County.

You see, Jimmie could pay his passage back. That’s why his trial balance approximated a state more embittering than bankruptcy. He could go back—come back—but again among his old pals he would be forced to find a job in order, not alone to live as he had become accustomed to live, but, more important, to hold up his end. And the only business he knew had been cut from under him by that—“animated feather duster,” as he delineated the governor who had “tied the can to racing in New York State.”

Jimmie Hatton followed the horses.

In his carefree youth Jimmie was an exercise boy at Sheepshead Bay. His ambition was to be a jock, but nature defeated this aim. Jimmie ate himself out of the saddle!

Carrying weight for youth, he became a book-

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maker's advance agent, otherwise a tout. But a tout he did not forever remain. He participated in several "killings," and reaching man's estate was heralded far and wide in the "pink uns" as Plunger Hatton. This title he retained against all bookmakers until his forced exile to England.

There were times before his expatriation when he was reported to be flattened out financially; other times when he was classed with the plungers of Wall Street. Never once, as a record of fact, had he been clean busted. Unlike most turf ventures he had salted away a tidy little sum in gilt-edged electric-lighting bonds. These he had purchased 'way below par, thanks to a tip from his pal at city hall, Dan Foss, and the securities were now quoted at double the figure he had paid for the coupon engraving. Every quarter Jimmie received \$312.50, or annually \$1,250—an amount representing interest at five per cent on the face value of the bonds.

In London, Jimmie Hatton could subsist on this income, if worse overtook worse, and make faces at the wolf. But not in little old America. It took real money, he told himself, to live comfortably at home. Jimmie hadn't it, and Jimmie had no sure thing in sight.

All he required was fifty thousand dollars. A mere bag o' shells, he dubbed it; a sum an office boy in Wall Street might peel off any bull movement. Fifty thousand dollars! Dan Foss had

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written to say that he could buy Jimmie a cozy freehold on the bright side of Comfort Street, U. S. A., for that trifling amount. Thus wrote Dan:

Racing may be dead, but we've found a game what leaves it at the post. That's city contracting! You can't lose, and what you make—say, it's shameful. Can grab you off a nice interest in our company for fifty thousand. From Mike Doolan's estate—you've heard poor Mike died in a sanitarium. Couldn't stand prosperity. Let me know bout the interest quick. Sure to be snapped up. Take care of yourself.

It was kind of Dan—oh, very kind! Perhaps some other friend would give him a chance to buy Mr. Rockefeller out. He was always getting good things offered him, was Jimmie.

And he possessed exactly one hundred pounds sterling to his name. Five hundred dollars in God's own currency! Which wasn't much for a "plunger." The bonds?—of course, but Jimmie would as soon have thought of hocking his mother's wedding ring, which he wore on his little finger, as to gamble with his "life insurance against manual labor." Not Jimmie Hatton.

But he did want that interest in the Invincible Contracting Company. And his chances of copping it were equal in any "book" to that of a 100-to-1 shot in a race with an odds-on favorite.

Wearily he turned to the racing page of the *St. James Gazette*, to ascertain what "The Judge" had to offer for explanation why Sunfire had been beaten the day before for the Coronation Cup.

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Sunfire had lost Jimmie fifty quid. And he had spent a lot of time and mental effort figuring the horse a safe winner. In Sunfire's first important race of the season—the Newmarket Handicap for three-year-olds and upward—the big chestnut's defeat was excusable. He had got off to a bad start, but even so had come with a splendid rush in the stretch, and Thistleton had beaten him scarcely half a length.

Sunfire's losing in the Longleat Plate at Salisbury, as Jimmie doped it out, was attributed to ivory-headed riding. Allis, the jock, had waited too long before making his run on Sunfire. At that Thistleton was a lucky winner, having no more than a neck to spare.

Thistleton had given Sunfire two pounds at Newmarket and four pounds in the Longleat Plate, but in the Coronation Cup at Epsom he had to concede ten pounds to his rival. This had decided Jimmie. Thistleton couldn't carry the added weight and beat Sunfire—two hundred and fifty dollars of Jimmie's money said so.

But again Thistleton had won—nosed out Sunfire. Jimmie could think of no "alibi" for the chestnut three-year-old, unless he was too straight in the shoulder for coming down the hill before Tattenham Corner.

It could hardly be the distance, for Sunfire had run as well at Newmarket for a mile and a quarter as at Salisbury for the straight mile, proving himself a good sticker. The Coronation

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Cup was but two furlongs farther—over the Derby course of a mile and a half. Jimmie was stumped. Could The Judge evolve an excuse, he wondered, and read:

Sunfire put up a good fight for the Coronation Cup, but couldn't quite do it against the redoubtable Thistleton. Three times these three-year-olds have met this season, and though each race has been fought gamely to the finish, thrice Thistleton has been the victor.

For the Gold Cup at Ascot, Thistleton will surely start favorite with Sunfire next in demand. If Thistleton for any reason were scratched—he has been worked hard, by the bye—Sunfire should rule favorite. With his rival a nonstarter, Sunfire would represent no end of a good sporting chance. In that event my tip would be to back the chestnut three-year-old.

Thoughtfully Jimmie read over the outgiving of The Judge:

If Thistleton . . . were scratched . . . Sunfire would represent no end of a good sporting chance.

"I wonder," whispered Jimmie to his own judgment, carefully folding up the paper for future reference.

In his mind's vision he recalled Sunfire as he had looked him over in the paddock at Epsom the day before. A magnificent chestnut, every inch a racing machine! Jimmie had liked his head, he had liked his hocks, as he liked his eye. Above all he had liked Sunfire's high-bred air—something more, even, than manners and conformation. A courtly, an estimable, and withal "a deferential horse," Jimmie had thought.

A deferential horse!

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II

Jimmie Hatton strolled into the Somerset next afternoon, and after "looking 'em over" as the summery procession of swell dames in filmy attire floated in to tea, visited the comfortable bar overlooking the Embankment. Immediately he was hailed by a group of American business men—London "entertainers" for their companies—and Americans not actively engaged in business.

There was Wilson Bayne, who had succeeded in giving a "bad" Yankee trust a good name in London town. Bayne had tons of personality and carloads of tact, everybody said so.

Seated next to him was H. Portner Cabot, formerly of Boston, who looked out for the shoe-machinery trust. Five years in London had made him quite human.

Colonel Rogers was there. The colonel was a perpetual promoter who never landed, yet who was never without expense money in some new promotion.

Of course Bobbie Marsh was present. Bobbie, according to Lanson, of the *Sun*, represented the American spending habit abroad.

To a man they liked Jimmie Hatton—liked him because they believed him thoroughly honest. "Squarest plunger in New York or London," any one of the group would have said.

"Hel-lo, Jimmie!" sang out Bayne. "Come

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join the ancient order of highbinders. Gentlemen, allow me—James Hatton, who is slowly but surely eliminating the British bookie from the scheme of things. Aren't you, Jimmie?"

"Slowly—yes," agreed Hatton. "There are a few left."

"You talk like a disappointed backer of Sunfire," Colonel Rogers observed.

"Beefy, take Mr. Hatton's order!" directed H. Portner Cabot.

"What will you have, sir?" asked Beefy, the wise waiter of the Somerset bar.

"Cigar, thank you—small, but strong."

The cigar fetched, lighted, and Jimmie Hatton smoking contentedly—his contribution to the general conviviality—Wilson Bayne made an announcement. Before making it he laid great stress on its importance.

"We've hit on a new name for Sunfire," he said.

"What's the matter with his moniker in Ruff's Guide?" asked Jimmie innocently.

"He was overlooked in the birthday honors," put in Cabot. "We must supply the deficiency."

"Y' see," explained Bayne, "for the third time this season Sunfire has dumped our coin in the stretch, when the race was as good as won by the sorrel devil."

"Chestnut," corrected Jimmie, who was becoming interested.

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"Yellow—that's his real color," growled Colonel Rogers.

"Go on, Wilson," urged Bobbie Marsh.

"Henceforth and in the hereafter," Bayne resumed, "Sunfire is to be—The Polite Horse!"

"Lay you a quid you don't get it," said Colonel Rogers.

"I don't—you win, colonel," answered Jimmie cheerfully.

"Sunfire always finishes second to Thistleton, doesn't he?" asked Bayne.

"So far," agreed Jimmie.

"Why?" asked Bobbie Marsh, acting the interlocutor.

"Because he's too *polite* to beat the other horse," explained Bayne.

"Says to Thistleton—'After you, my dear Alphonse!' " the colonel interpreted.

"Wherefore—The Polite Horse," concluded Cabot.

"I s-e-e," said Jimmie.

Then as quickly as he could, without appearing to do so, Jimmie Hatton changed the conversation.

III

On the Saturday before Ascot, Thistleton, the popular favorite for the Gold Cup, broke down. His trainer sent him over the full course, and while the three-year-old showed no actual lameness at the finish, he pulled up very leg weary.

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The afternoon papers announced that Thistleton had been scratched by his owner, Lord Hardwicke. And without exception every racing authority, including The Judge, picked Sunfire to win the big race. So generally was the chestnut preferred that it was reasonably certain he would rule an even-money favorite. In three big events Sunfire had run second—twice a very close second—to Thistleton. What horse was there to beat the chestnut three-year-old? Not an expert would hazard a tip on any other thoroughbred to outrun Sunfire.

Jimmie Hatton experienced a most trying Sunday. He figured and he doped—he shut his eyes and called loudly upon his common sense.

Was he to back Sunfire and rely upon The Polite Horse to recoup his season's losses?

Jimmie didn't know—couldn't determine. Tired out, head weary, he went to bed, more homesick than ever for Brooklyn.

Monday morning brought no relief. In truth, his condition of mind became one of more acute desperation. There was a week-end cable from Dan Foss, who urged Jimmie most emphatically to buy the Doolan interest in the contracting company. The urgency of an immediate decision was underscored—"in four days." That meant, Jimmie supposed, until Thursday—the day of the Gold Cup. Then the chance would be gone. "Only fifty thousand to be comfortable all your life among your pals," concluded Dan.

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Only fifty thousand!

"Ha!" Jimmie was homesick enough to cry, viewed it as a bitter joke.

He endeavored to dismiss it from his thoughts, but couldn't. It simply wouldn't be dismissed! The opportunity Dan Foss presented joined hands, so to say, with Jimmie's hunch on the Gold Cup—not his dope, but his hunch. Remember that.

Vainly James Hatton sought an avenue of escape. He tried logic with himself. Failed. He tried persuasion. Failed again. Then he asserted his authority—authority of sense over sentiment, of mind over disaster. Failed dismally. Upon which Jimmie called himself every variety of fool he could think of, and then coupled with "fool" an assortment of derogatory and shameful modifying epithets from his rich vocabulary. All to no purpose. He gave it up.

But he fought every step of the way to the safety-deposit vaults, where, dominated by Opportunity and Hunch, he removed from safe-keeping the electric-lighting bonds—his insurance against manual labor—and with the precious securities in his pocket, visited the office of Wilson Bayne. Jimmie had done no bank borrowing in London, and required help.

Bayne knew the bonds well, and said offhand that he could arrange a loan in a couple of hours' time.

"How much do you want to raise?" he asked.

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"The limit!—all the securities will stand," replied Jimmie hurriedly. Then cursed himself to himself once more.

"Believe I can get you the equivalent for twenty-five thousand dollars."

"Fine!" Jimmie said it without enthusiasm, as he might have said "Fudge!"

"How do you want the money?"

"In five and ten-pound notes."

Wilson Bayne glanced curiously from the bonds to the countenance of James Hatton, then said:

"Right-o, Jimmie. Meet me at the Somerset bar, two o'clock, and I'll have your money."

"Two o'clock, Somerset," repeated Jimmie, and arose to go.

"Say—none of my business," confessed Bayne—"but if it's no secret, what's your game, Jimmie?"

"No secret, simply this: As a backer of horses I've been losing pretty regular this season. So I'm going to turn bookmaker."

"Bookmaker?" questioned Bayne incredulously. "You are? For good?"

"That depends—how I make out. See you at the Somerset. Thanks for your trouble. So long."

It was never the rôle of wisdom, Jimmie believed, to appear too eager. Restraint was a top-weight virtue. Therefore he sauntered into the

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Somerset bar fifteen minutes after two. Wilson Bayne, who had arrived before time, was at the large round table, about which Beefy was moving quietly, taking orders.

"Sorry to be late," apologized Jimmie, "but—"

"Aw right, Jimmie," broke in Bayne. "Here's your money." Bayne handed him a small bundle of snow-white Bank of England notes, which are never reissued, therefore always clean and non-germ-bearing. "Better count it."

Jimmie counted the notes — indifferently, it appeared to the little group; rolled them up, slipped a rubber band about the roll, and stuffed it into the pocket of his trousers. Then he took a cigar from Beefy, pierced the end with a cutter he had in his pocket, calmly lighted the dark panetela, and began to smoke in silence. Everybody at the table had been looking at him the while, but apparently Jimmie hadn't realized it — or been moved by it.

H. Portner Cabot, formerly of Boston, was the first to speak.

"We understand from Bayne——"

"You said it wasn't any secret," interrupted Bayne.

"Course," agreed Jimmie.

"——that you are intending to make a 'book' hereafter," finished Cabot.

Jimmie nodded. Then added, with a pleasing smile: "At your service, gentlemen."

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"Reckon you wouldn't want us for clients on the Gold Cup," said Colonel Rogers.

"Why not?" asked Jimmie. "Your money's as good as anybody's—better, I'd say."

"But we're all plunging on the same horse—on the horse you probably fancy," explained Bobbie Marsh. "We're out to get even."

"So?" murmured Jimmie. "Before you name the horse I'll say now I'll cover your money."

"On Sunfire—will you?" asked Bayne eagerly.

"Sure!" Jimmie spoke lightly. "On Sunfire or any horse in the Gold Cup."

"What odds?" inquired Colonel Rogers.

"What's your notion of odds?" countered Jimmie.

"Y' ought to give us seven to five at least, I reckon," responded the colonel.

"Not James Hatton. Even money," announced Jimmie decidedly.

"Even money on a horse that hasn't won this year?" whined the colonel.

"Even money on the horse that's run second in three of the big events this season—second to Thistleton, the winner in all three races, who's scratched!" Jimmie gave a positive jerk to his head which bore conviction.

"That's fair enough, commented Wilson Bayne. "Go you five hundred quid Sunfire wins."

"You're on!—five hundred quid," said Jimmie, making a memorandum in his pocket notebook.

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"Go you the same," said H. Portner Cabot.

"Five hundred quid," said Jimmie, writing the bet down.

"Me, too—the same," piped Bobbie Marsh.

Jimmie agreed. "Five hundred quid," he wrote in his book.

"I'm game," insisted Colonel Rogers. "I'll bet you five hundred quid, even money, Sunfire wins the Gold Cup."

"You're on, colonel!—five hundred quid Sunfire wins the Gold Cup."

Jimmie wrote; then, closing his notebook, suggested:

"Suppose we meet here Friday—say at one o'clock—and make settlements?"

"Suits me. Right-o! Friday at one. Day after the race," came tumbling the answers of Sunfire's four backers.

"Beefy!"

"Yes, sir," responded the wise waiter of the Somerset bar.

"Another round," ordered Jimmie Hatton.

"Very good, sir," replied Beefy.

If The Polite Horse won the Gold Cup, Jimmie Hatton already stood to lose approximately ten thousand dollars.

So much the American invaders in the Somerset bar understood. And when Jimmie had departed, they lamented his headlong plunge to ruin. For they liked him—he was square, always on the level, and never a sponger.

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"Good sort—Jimmie Hatton," began Bobbie Marsh. "Too bad to trim him."

"Reckon it's his own fault," said Colonel Rogers. "He offered to bet before we named the horse."

"Know he did," admitted Marsh, "but, all the samey, we're backing a certain winner."

"Nothing certain in a horse race," cautioned Wilson Bayne.

"Usually not," conceded H. Portner Cabot. "But when a horse has Sunfire's record—three seconds to the same winner, and that winner scratched—why, it's as sure a thing as one will ever get in a gamble."

"Right you are," agreed Bayne.

"What's got into Jimmie, d'you suppose?" asked Marsh.

James Hatton, turned bookmaker, was inconspicuously but properly dressed for the notable occasion. He wore dark steel-gray trousers, dull black morning coat and waistcoat, rich but quiet necktie with plain snow-white linen, and a well-ironed silk hat. And he wasn't accoutered with field glasses. Naturally good looking and modest, he might have been mistaken for a gentleman—using the misused term in its English significance—and not likely spotted as a bookie.

"No turf plunger lived who didn't come a cropper sooner or later," argued the colonel. "Jimmie Hatton's tumble is long past due."

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"He's lasted better than any of them," Bayne reminded the others.

"Nevertheless, I hate to be one to kick him into the 'broke' class," insisted Marsh.

"Course you do—you have a pipe line to a trust treasury," growled Colonel Rogers. "Some of us have to rustle to keep out of that broke class. I'm one, I don't mind saying."

IV

Ascot Heath, you should know, is the royal race course, situate but a few miles from Windsor Castle.

Derby Day at Epsom Downs represents one end of the social ladder, Gold Cup Day at Ascot the other. At the Derby all England unbends, everybody fraternizes. Ascot is much more starchy. The royal procession makes of Gold Cup Day *the* outdoor event on the social calendar. With it there's nothing anywhere to compare, unless it be the Sunday of the Grand Prix at Longchamps. One for England, the other for France constitute the summer "opening" for society. Thenceforth fashion is a copy cat.

As on Gold Cup Day appearances count for much, it is high time to describe the figure cut by Jimmie Hatton. He didn't display, as critics of racing might have expected, white spats, checked trousers, speaking waistcoat, wide braid on his morning coat, a diamond or two, or a pearl-gray

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top hat with a black band, to which odd headgear the king had extended royal sanction.

Jimmie steered clear of "the ring," otherwise Tattersall's, until after the first race. Thus he was a quiescent onlooker at the arrival of the king and queen.

Every one English was on tiptoe of circumspect excitement as the hour drew near for the royal entry. All loyal eyes were turned in the direction of the Windsor Road to the Heath, when, out of the heat mist, the cavalcade burst into view—outriders, postilions, high-stepping horses, the royal equipage, and then the carriages bearing the favored guests of their majesties.

The semi-state procession approached the assemblage of waiting racegoers at a rattling gait, the powerful bays attached to the carriages—four to the royal conveyance—all of a lather. Reaching the stands the pace slowed down almost to a walk, and the cortège moved majestically along the course.

In the royal equipage was a bearded man of commonplace visage and demeanor, and a self-conscious woman of more commanding mien. The attendant carriages were filled with royalty or titled personages of less degree, none of them below the rank of earl and countess, however. They seemed to feel the weight of their hereditary responsibility, socially speaking, for, one and all, their countenances were very austere. When the royal inclosure was reached, the king and

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queen alighted and proceeded to the pavilion, followed by their haughty guests.

With the outriders and postilions in gorgeous liveries, heavily ornamented in gold, with the pagoda-shaped parasols of queens—the consort of the ex-king of the republic of Portugal, humorously called *Queen Augusta*, was in the party—with the art sunshades of duchesses and of countesses, the royal procession was spectacular, if not really impressive. But Jimmie Hatton was unmoved.

“Like a circus, but not near so classy as the grand entry at Barnum & Bailey’s,” he mumbled to himself.

Jimmie left the “gayly dressed throng” for the bustle and jostle of the ring. It was business now—riches or ruin.

In the betting ring Jimmie Hatton began craftily to take bets on Sunfire. If backers asked what price he would lay against any other horse entered for the Gold Cup, he would invariably reply:

“I’ve laid my book against him, sir; I can’t offer you a fair price.” He was out to wager a small fortune that *The Polite Horse* wouldn’t win. Nothing else doing.

As soon as he had bet an amount equal to fifteen thousand dollars, which, with the ten thousand wagered at the Somerset, amounted to twenty-five thousand dollars—all the money he had in the world, or could raise on security—he

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started to leave the ring. But at that moment Wilson Bayne brought up Lord Witherby, introduced Jimmie to him, and said that his lordship wanted to back Sunfire. Somewhat awed by the hearty handclasp of a real lord, and anxious to oblige, before he realized it Jimmie had accepted a wager of four hundred quid—two thousand dollars.

Then there was an unaccountable rush to his book. Those who favored Sunfire seemed afraid lest they might not get their money on. Jimmie was carried off his feet by the onslaught. When he could fight his way out of the betting ring, and in a corner of the lawn consult his betting book, he found, to his horror, that he had wagered fully ten thousand dollars more than he had!

If Sunfire won he would be obligated to pay *thirty-five thousand dollars*, and all he possessed to his name was a hundred quid above twenty-five thousand American dollars. Incidentally—what a word to use!—he would lose his electric-lighting bonds, his insurance against manual labor. Realization of his dire predicament gave him the same unhappy feeling at the pit of his stomach that one gets when an express elevator drops ten stories without notice to passengers.

He didn't permit himself to think that possibly he might have thirty-five thousand clear after redeeming his precious bonds. Not for one fleeting second. Although never before a quit-

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ter, James Hatton was in a dark-blue funk. It was partly because he faced ruin. It was even more because he was so acutely homesick, and home appeared to be receding all too rapidly. If a good fairy, at the moment, had offered to transport him to Brooklyn, and set him down in Flatbush, free of debt and with one hundred dollars in his pocket, Jimmie Hatton, plunger, would have transferred his bets in a moment. Yes, he was ready to quit.

The race for the Gold Cup, two miles and four furlongs, starts at the cup post above the grand stand, and the course is once around to the winning post, which is at the boundary between the royal inclosure and the paddock. Therefore, in the running of the classic event, the horses twice pass in front of the lawn, Tattersall's, and the royal inclosure. The time is under four minutes and a half; so Jimmie prepared for four and a half hours of misery!

His intention was to try to find standing room in the grand stand. But nearing the entrance to the elevated structure something queer happened to his legs. They seemed to cave under him, and he sank down on the steps of the stand—not the lower step, for he contrived to totter to a place which gave him a circumscribed view over the heads of the conclave on the lawn.

There was a tedious, nerve-lashing delay at the cup post, caused by two or three vicious brutes which insisted on making trouble for over

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thirty well-behaved starters. At last a shout announced that they were off!

As they flashed by the grand stand Jimmie furtively took a look. In the lead was Destiny, an outsider, bent on running her legs off. Next came Amner, twenty-five-to-one-shot, and then Lie-abed, second choice in the betting. Sunfire was fourth, excellently positioned and running easily. Jolly Miller, another outsider, was fifth, and close behind ran his majesty's horse, Long-spear.

"The favorite goes well," remarked a swell who stood near the steps within range of Jimmie's hearing.

"What pretty colors!" exclaimed the doll-faced creature with the swell; "violet jacket, light-green cap. Wish I'd backed those colors—Sunfire will win!"

Jimmie groaned and covered his face with his hands. Over four hours more of agony!

"Not four hours—four minutes," whispered Common Sense.

"Will drag like four hours," urged Cruel Fate.

"Four minutes and you will know whether you have won," said Common Sense.

"Four hours on the grid, and you'll see you're ruined," insisted Cruel Fate.

"For God's sake, have it over!" moaned Jimmie.

The scourging suspense was frightful. Yet he felt in his heart there was no hope.

THE POLITE HORSE

A faint murmur, like the droning of idling insects, was wafted down the course and hummed in Jimmie's ear. Gradually this murmur, the common voice of the crowd, increased, grew in volume, until it developed into a medley of sound, incoherent but expressive of vital significance—proclaiming the finish of a most important race. The fascination of this sound no one could deny. The phlegmatic English were roused by it to the pitch of downright enthusiasm. It was astonishing how such a vast concourse of people could be whipped into near madness by the struggle of less than half a dozen thoroughbreds—for to this number the contest for the Gold Cup was now reduced after two miles and more of grueling pace.

A terrific roar disclosed that the favorite was well to the front, running shoulder to shoulder with Jolly Miller, a rank outsider certain to wither in the finish. Already Lie-abed was beaten, slipping back at every stride.

"Sunfire! Sunfire!" was the cry of victory from the lungs of thousands, backers of the chestnut three-year-old.

All was over, thought Jimmie, and glad he was for the relief. It's uncertainty that kills.

As the pick of England's thoroughbreds, fighting for the Gold Cup, nostrils distended and showing red, every ounce of stamina put forth in the final effort, boomed down the stretch toward the winning post, the shout of "Sunfire! Sun-

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fire!" continued. But suddenly a new cry went up.

A jockey wearing the purple, gold and scarlet colors dear to all loyal Britons, made a rush on a powerful black thoroughbred. As Jolly Miller tired, Longspear challenged Sunfire for the lead. Instantly the cry:

"The king wins! The king wins!"

Jimmie couldn't believe it—wouldn't believe it. From other race meetings he understood full well that always there was a conspicuous following for his majesty's entry. Always a contingent too ready to acclaim the king a winner. Many a time—doubtless this time—the cry of victory for the royal stables proved to be premature. So Jimmie goaded himself to remember. His hopes shouldn't rise, to sink again into despair.

Neck and neck the chestnut and the black, shaking off pursuers, raced for the winning post. On and on they fought, Sunfire and Longspear. It was a gallant struggle, and for a brief second promised a dead heat. Valiantly his majesty's horse endeavored to respond to the royal jockey's whip and command. But he couldn't forge ahead. Loyal subjects realized that their choice of winner was hardly to be justified. There was an appreciable diminution in the cry "The king wins!" Jimmie was among the first to sense it, and once more his heart sank, express elevator-like.

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Sunfire was running beautifully. The grand chestnut to all appearances possessed sure reserve power.

With a last burst of speed the favorite would now win the Gold Cup. Scarcely one in a thousand thought otherwise. Again the shout:

“Sunfire! Sunfire wins!”

Then, to the amazement of everybody, to the consternation of his legion of backers, Sunfire, the favorite, after glancing at the black thoroughbred racing at his side, faltered! Or was it rather a voluntary slowing down on the part of The Polite Horse—true deference of a loyal animal, born and bred in England, to his majesty?

However it was, Jimmie Hatton, who had lacked the nerve to raise his eyes to the winning post as the victor's number was hoisted into view, found himself thrilled by the air played by the band.

Off came the hats of the male multitude to the strains of “God Save the King.” Off came Jimmie's hat, and he stood bareheaded with tears of joy coursing down his cheek. It was the sweetest tune he'd ever heard. To Jimmie's ear—“America.”

From Waterloo James Hatton, reformed bookmaker and man of large affairs, went directly to the cable office, and sent this message to his pal, Dan Foss:

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Cinch me Doolan interest your company. Cabling five thousand deposit. Sailing Saturday, *Lauretania*. Meet me Sandy Hook with tug and brass band. Sure am coming back.

JIMMIE.

V

Not to appear anxious at all, Jimmie Hatton was half an hour late at the Somerset bar next day. The backers of Sunfire were all there, with the exception of Colonel Rogers. After Bayne, Cabot, and Marsh had paid up, Bayne delivered a message to the bookmaker pro tem.

"Here's two hundred and fifty quid from the colonel. He sends word he'll pay you the other two-fifty soon as he possibly can. Poor old codger is flat broke, I guess. You'll have to give him a little time, Jimmie, or else his friends must chip in and settle for him."

For a moment Jimmie said nothing, then inquired:

"Who hit on the moniker for Sunfire?"

"What—The Polite Horse?" asked Bobbie Marsh.

Jimmie nodded.

"The colonel," answered Bayne.

"Then I owe him a fat commission," said Jimmie. "I think two-fifty quid would be about right. It was the colonel gave me my tip."

"What tip?"—in unison.

"The Polite Horse—that he would *not* win," said Jimmie.

"What *do* you mean?"—chorus.

THE POLITE HORSE

“‘After you, my dear Alphonse!’” Jimmie smiled.

“We may be dull—guess we are,” said Bayne, “and I guess you’re bright, Jimmie—the way you cleaned up on the Gold Cup. Admitting all this, please explain.”

“All right,” agreed Jimmie. “The start’s in Brooklyn—h-o-m-e.” He rolled the word on his tongue; it was sweet, indeed. “There was a pie-bald nag used to haul a milk wagon through my street—Flatbush Avenue. Knew ev’ry customer, he did. Would stop at the right door, and the moment the driver showed his mug would move off toward the next customer’s. Had the route down cold.”

H. Portner Cabot shot Jimmie a look, which was as to say: “How very irrelevant this nonsense.” But Jimmie, unheeding, continued his story:

“One day—great day in Brooklyn—all the Knight Templars in the United States paraded—marched through Flatbush. A lot of the sachems, or whatever you call ’em, had to ride. Gee, but there was a scramble for mounts! Every horse that didn’t have to *pos-i-tive-ly* do his regular work was drafted. Among ’em the milk-wagon horse! He’d finished his route in time for the parade.

“Well, when the procession turned into Flatbush Avenue near my house, one plumed knight found himself stalled—standing still right in

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front of my door! The milkhorse stopped just where he was accustomed to stop. He had the habit!"

"What's this to do with yesterday's race?" asked Bobbie Marsh peevishly.

"You think it's got nothing to do with the Gold Cup. I think it's got everything to do with it. Listen:

"When you fellows told me in this here bar that you were going to call Sunfire The Polite Horse, you took it as a joke. *That's where you lost.* I took it seriously. *That's where I won.*"

"I may be dense," interposed Wilson Bayne—regarded as the cleverest American business man in London—"but I don't see yet."

"You may be," chuckled Jimmie, "but you will see. Wait!

"I thought and thought about your little joke.—The Polite Horse," Jimmie went on. "Thought how Sunfire in ev'ry race this season had run second—been beaten by Thistleton. And ev'ry time I thought about it, the remark of Colonel Rogers popped into my head—'After you, my dear Alphonse!'"

"Come to the point, come to the point," urged Cabot.

"Presently," said Jimmie. "But let me tell you that deliberation ain't a bad thing. It won me all of thirty-five thousand dollars, deliberation did!

"You see," resumed Jimmie, "it wasn't alto-

THE POLITE HORSE

gether that Sunfire ran second—didn't win. It was that *he didn't want to win*. The Polite Horse—'After you, my dear Alphonse!' That's what my hunch told me. Sunfire was used to running second—letting the other horse beat him. Didn't know no better. It was habit, habit—like turning into my door was habit with the nag on the milk wagon.

"I says to myself, says I: 'Makes no difference what horse is at his withers in the stretch, Sunfire wouldn't win. He always finished right behind another horse—he always will! Just like the wheel horse on a coach. He wouldn't think of being leader. So The Polite Horse wouldn't think of passing the winning post first. Otherwise you fellows would never have called the beast The Polite Horse.

"That's all," concluded Jimmie Hatton.

"You're some guesser," admitted Bobbie Marsh.

"Jimmie's a mind reader from Boston," observed Wilson Bayne.

"No—a psychologist from Cambridge," corrected H. Portner Cabot.

"Just a dopester *of* Flatbush." Jimmie grinned, and beckoned to Beefy.

THE CHARGE

BY W. DOUGLAS NEWTON

THE CHARGE

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THE guns, cleverly masked behind the battle scene like the ministrants of stage thunder, began to pulse up and up with the enormous clamor of concentrated fire. The earth began to tremble beneath this excess of sound; the keen, high raging of the rifle fire became marked against the mighty noise of the artillery with a sound no more than the whimper of a fretful baby. The guns were crushing out all opposition in the market-place of clangor.

The firing-line behind the thousand tiny mounds it had dug to protect itself, stiffened when the first Homeric burst of the guns swamped over the battle-field. A perceptible ripple of preparation swept over the line, an intuitive easing of harness and tautening of straps. Hats were pulled down firm on the brows, rifles were held forward and examined with eyes of ruthless analysis. Clips were whipped from pouches and thumbed home crisply into magazines. At one impulse eyes swiveled round and fixed themselves on a little group of officers sitting under cover of a wall. One of the officers had a whistle lifted ready for instant action. An

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orderly was crouching close to the ground with the disk-head of a field telephone to his ear. The officers, particularly the officer with the poised whistle, watched the orderly, their bodies set in the graven lines of infinite attention.

The officers knew what the men in the firing-line had sensed. This gigantic outburst of massed artillery was the prelude to their advance. When the lashing shrapnel had prepared the way to the Commanding Officer's satisfaction, a message would come to them over the four miles of the telephone wire. Then they would do their best to rush the enemy's trenched position.

Second-Lieutenant Hugo Bellair of Company B lay on his stomach a little to the rear of the men in his section. He was watching the officer with the whistle with an intentness so fierce that it was painful. When that whistle sounded the entire regiment would start up and they would charge, and it would be his first charge.

He had lived for and feared this moment for the last ten years. All the glory and all the terror of it that had fought in his heart for those years would now be put to the test. He himself would be put to the test. Would he come out well, or would fear unnerve him into mean and ignoble disgrace? He was an imaginative boy; he saw every bullet that was fired at the regiment, every shell that split the air with a loud crash overhead—and he felt the pain of every

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wound they made. He saw himself unstrung by his fear of pain, and turning tail and scuttling away to safety before the eyes of all the army. He feared that act above all other things.

As he waited he could hear the voices of the men before him, standing out with the curious definition of small sounds against a background of huge noise. The men were feeling the tension, fretting at the suspense. He heard the voice of a man standing near him muttering over and over again:

“Oh, get on. Oh, do get on. For th’ Lord’s sake get on with it.” He mentally agreed with the tense and irritable eagerness of the private. But as he agreed the orderly at the telephone jerked upright. The officers round him stirred spasmodically. The officer holding the whistle jumped about and faced the man in the firing-line. His hand lifted to his lips. . . .

Lieutenant Bellair came to his knee at once. As he arose something flicked like a fly against his neck, and in an unexpected way, his vision became blurred with the intensity of his emotion. In a flash, however, his senses cleared. He felt himself running forward with his men in the opening movements of the charge.

At once, as he ran, he knew that his fears had been baseless. He was not going to turn tail at all. He was going to do immense things. He was going to carry the charge right home on his own

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shoulders. He was going to win the battle for his country.

He ran on nursing his men in the short section rushes with a skill that was genius. He seemed to be able to gage the psychological moment for whipping them up and on, and the moment to halt them and fling them prone so that little or no hurt came their way. He dropped them at cover by instinct, and he got them over dead ground in a way quite uncanny. This new, fine sense of generalship was indeed intoxicating. It gave him the strong clear emotions of a batsman well set. He could do nothing wrong. He laughed aloud at his fears. He saw himself covered with glory now, and throughout the campaign.

Even the plain that had looked so cramped before their charge began, appeared illimitable now they were on their feet. On the other hand, though the high scarp of downs had backed miles away from them, they also loomed higher and more menacing. Their sides sleek here, dotted with tufts of gorse like the hide of a mangy poodle there, seemed to have become impreguably steep. The thin, trailing fume of picric that had burned weakly upward from the slopes and crest, had now thickened ominously and hung in the sky in a slate-black pall of death and slaughter. The whole face of the hill seemed to lift itself in thunder and hurl its avalanche of death down upon them. The charging line how-

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ever lunged on with the headlong impulse of men who knew their lives were charmed.

The first field was a paddock as green as aquamarine, and soft from recent rain; they were over that quickly. A hedge came up before them and they crushed through it, hammered across a white-hot tape of road, then up a steep bank onto a field arid and slippery with stubble. The full-throated gale of the firing hit them here. The first men up the bank hung in the fierce wind of it and were then blown clean away. For a moment there was a minor chaos. The shrapnel felt for them, found them. A squall of shells leaped into the air above their heads, smashed the sky to fragments with their harsh shattering crashes, and drove down an infernal rain of iron death. The men ran about like insects under the canopy of the shrapnel's soft white and magenta-colored smoke, like insects they sought blindly for and never found, places to hide from this aerial destroyer.

Bellair forgot all about the shrapnel and spurred on his men. The clarity of his mind was extraordinary. He whipped them with his tongue, soothed them with his voice in an admirable instinctive manner. He pulled them into order and then hurled them across the stubble field. With a sort of divine *flair* he had found a ditch under a hedge-set mound. In the lee of the mound he ran his men toward the enemy. And not his own men only. He discovered that

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his captain and the senior lieutenant had been killed, and he was in sole charge of the entire company.

The stubble field was full of the whirling mist of battle, and countless men moving like wraiths in this mist. Thanks to the mound, his own men were not suffering much, but across the field through the mist he saw men diving earthward in the final and nerveless way of death, and men spinning and falling under the thresh of the bullets. The air above this field seemed packed with puff-balls of shrapnel, as though some monstrous crop with invisible stems were blossoming there. Now and then the surface of the field would gush earth and flame and thick greasy smoke in one vast hiccup, as a high power shell landed and burst. Always overhead, even beating at the hedge above Bellair with flail-like fingers of steel, passed the whirring hiss of ceaseless rifle bullets. The uproar was indescribable; the charging men were living in the core of a giant, palpitating hell of sound.

The ditch came to an end with stunning abruptness. With stunning abruptness the great hill towered right over their heads in a way that made them feel that it was about to fall down on top of them and crush them flat. There was a short sloping piece of brown turned earth between them and the foot of the hill, a thick belt of bush and trees, then out of the bush rose the hillside as steep as the roof of a house.

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The entire surface of the hill was quick and humming with battle. Its olive surface was slashed right up to the crest with the acid light of rifle fire, and draped with the veiling *crêpe* of *picric* fume. Trenches masked with turfs to render them indistinguishable from the slope, ran, with no more dignity than bunkers, in odd terraces up to the summit. On platforms screened and defended with tree branches and thick gorse, were many viperish little machine guns spitting and jetting like steam exhaust-pipes. Where the hill yielded itself in more easy and supple lines field guns were placed behind felled trees whose branches stuck out in the face of the enemy. These guns could rake the attack with a harrowing enfilading fire. At one place where a gap came down almost to the plain, the sturdy star-angle of a field redan showed; the slope facing it was webbed with wire entanglements, and supporting trenches had been scarred on various sections of the hillside.

Directly his men halted at the end of the ditch, Bellair's eyes found this place. The instinct that had carried him so splendidly forward fastened upon it at once, and he saw at once a weakness. His men had dropped to earth immediately, where there was a tiny cliff of earth affording cover. They should have gone on, but Bellair held them while they recovered wind enough to take them over the final lap of the charge.

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The rest of the regiment heaved across the turned land and fell thundering on the thick bush in a great wave crested with the spume of bayonets. The bush which had been lying passive all through the advance, started to life with an appalling clap. Even before it spoke Bellair's instinct told him that it was packed with the enemy's infantry. As the two bodies of men came together in a great worrying tangle of battling, the sound they made was like that of two immense dogs fighting to kill. The smoke of the battle began to whirl in great spirals, catching at the leaves with trailing fingers as it rose. Since the armies had intermingled the firing of the artillery tailed off to nothing, but the shrill and hateful screaming of the rifles rose and rose until it reached an insane point of shrewish fury. Stabbing into this sound beat the febrile hammering of the spiteful automatic guns. The one pound shells detonated in the heart of the fight with the sound of giant crackers and their bursting charges strung the gray blanket of the smoke with pretty flower-like flames. The flames from the rifles slit and stabbed the smoke like knives.

Bellair looked at the mad incoherence of the battling and knew instantly that it could end but one way. Section after section went charging into the fight, but by a mere frontal attack, men of flesh and blood could not break through the strong line of works hidden by the bushes and trees. Bellair knew that the fight could not be

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won at that point. Again he looked up at the redan and the gap it guarded. Yes, if he took his company up at that in a certain way there need be no disastrous frontal attack.

The battle under the trees wore itself down to a sullen and heavy crackling of rifles. The attacking force began to struggle limply out of the smoke in ones and twos, and then in little groups. But they were good soldiers. Though death slashed through the little squads with a regularity that was monotonous to behold, the men failed to show excitement or hurry. They were veterans retiring in their own way and at their own pace. When they had fallen back a score of yards they faced about with the calmness of men on a parade ground. With icy deliberation they fired a shouting and defiant volley at their enemies in the bush. As they loosed, their supports came swarming up, and caught in the swing of this surge of men, they, nothing loath, went back at a rush into the inferno under the trees.

Bellair had already passed the word to his sergeants, and when the fight had raged a few seconds, he had his men on their feet. Without a moment's hesitation he flung them in a superb and sweeping gesture of attack at the redan.

His company springing across the brown turned earth came into the fight with all the dramatic qualities of surprise. The defenders concentrating all their energies on the main attack

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missed the initial movement of their rush. For eternities of seconds the handful of men in the company raced forward through what seemed to them the thick and heavy silence before a cyclone. Death must come blasting in fury onto them at any moment, they knew. Running with all the speed they could, they yet waited with scarcely beating hearts the squall of death. They could see the entire surface of the hill with the startling clarity of things perceived in a mirror. They could see the mechanic-like zeal of the machine gunners as they flicked shell after shell into the wings of the fight about the bushes, they could see little rills of men being hurried toward this main fight, they could see even the artillerymen in the redan craning forward, looking down toward the bushes and wondering when they would get their chance. They saw it all with a vivid flash. Then the picture blurred with hurry: they, themselves, were seen.

The men in the redan became volatile with an abrupt nervousness, they turned about wildly like men cringing before an unexpected blow, darting nervous glances allwhither to discover from what angle the attack would strike at them. They saw the headlong company and began fussing with a frantic effort to meet and stop it with gun-fire. Men hurled themselves at the guns behind the abatis, tried to lift them by sheer muscular effort to meet the charge. Riflemen came flinging into line, the place seemed to take

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fire and blaze away in a mad effort to sweep the company off the face of the earth at once.

But the defenders were too late. Bellair's infallible instinct had served him well. It had found for him a line of attack that not only took the redan at an unprotected spot, but also carried his men onto it in such a way that no decimating fire could stop them. Before the guns could be swung round, before the infantry in the redan and in the supporting trenches could bring to bear on the attackers a steady man-stopping fire, the company was on the redan and in it. The feeble few infantry left in the bush-trenches by the resistance of the main attack fired one nerveless volley, and Bellair's men were on them, tossing them aside, punching through them. Their defense went out as a snuffed candle goes out and the company was going up the hill with unthwartable élan.

The fret of a ragged rifle fire caught a fringe of his men and sent them flopping down the hill, but it mattered not at all. The company was through that zone immediately, across a flattish slope and into the unprotected rear of the redan. Men scrambled from the guns and thrust themselves at them. Bellair's men blazed one volley and then the angry bayonets flashed in the sun and drove deep and home. The muck of men fought and scrambled amid the guns. A large officer gorgeted with the scarlet of the staff, swung down on the lieutenant; Bellair parried

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his thrust with an unthinking ease; circled with his sword and took the man in the throat. A sergeant sprang to a gun, and began wrenching free its breech-piece; Bellair's revolver hand came up in a crisp jerk and the sergeant jumped and came down smash on the gun. A gunner tried to shoot, Bellair got in under the rifle and hammered the man insensible with his sword hilt. Then it was all over. The gunners and infantry were scuttling from the redan. The men in the supporting trenches were breaking away and running. They knew well enough that with the capture of that gap their flank was turned, that the battle was lost for them. The general in command of the attackers knew it, too. Like lightning he snatched at the chance Bellair had given him, and right on the heels of the victorious company there came lunging regiment after regiment of attacking infantry. They came rolling through the gap in irresistible swarms, smashing the back of the defense with the awful pressure of their thrust.

Bellair saw them pass. As they went by they looked up at him and cheered. The air was full of cheering; as he heard, the lieutenant became intoxicated with the glory of it and of the deed that he had done. He that had been filled with the terror of his own cowardice had achieved this wonder, had proved himself in this marvelous and splendid way. He began to grow weak with joy, his vision blurred with the immense reaction of

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emotion. . . . The whole world seemed to fade—to grow black. Was he really falling——

The officer who had the whistle in his hand had almost lifted it to his lips. The men behind the mounds braced themselves for an instant's uprising. The man who had wanted to "get on with it" stopped grumbling.

"'Allo," he jerked, "th' little lootenant 'as got it in th' neck."

"Hey?" said the man beside him.

"Right in th' neck," said the first man. "Blown 'arf of it away. Look 'e's down!"

"Oo?" asked the man beside him.

"Lootenant Bellair, look!"

"Shut yer face," snapped the sergeant close by. "We're off. Now boys, leg it proper."

The whistle had reached the lips of the officer. Its thin keen sound cut into the giant uproar of the concentrated guns like a thread of silver. Just as Lieutenant Hugo Bellair of Company B dived forward onto his face, the regiment rose up and like a crowd bursting over a race-course, went forward at a rush.

The charge had only just begun.

THE WEDDING BOB DEAN RAN

BY EDWARD BOLTWOOD

THE WEDDING BOB DEAN RAN

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I

BEDELIA CITY first had wind that something queer was happening at Bob Deans when Bob was seen to stop at the new minister's house and drive away with the Rev. Mr. Hamlin seated in the ranch-buggy beside him. The amazing spectacle caused the front legs of three chairs, tilted against Beebe's Elite Palace Hotel and Livery-Stable, to descend with a single thud.

"Dean, he was plumb sober a half-hour ago!" exclaimed Beebe, staring wildly.

"Mebbe that sunstroke Bob had last year," said Conk Hoover, "is just takin' a holt."

T. K. O'Hara, the renegade attorney from Los Angeles, feebly rubbed his incredulous eyes.

"Three witnesses," he declared, "ain't compeitorial to substantialize no such evidence as what we're seein'."

The buggy disappeared in the dust of the road which led to Bob Dean's sheep-ranch. Little Mr. Hamlin, breathing through a prim handkerchief, glanced perplexedly at stalwart Mr. Dean. The

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clergyman had never met Bob before, and he had no clearer notion of the purpose of his journey than had the trio at the livery-stable. Bob Dean, in the words of T. K. O'Hara, was always about as talkative as a ton of coal.

Arrived at the ranch-house, Bob tossed the reins to a Chinaman, and dismounted.

"Walk in," said he.

The visitor obeyed, after shaking the dust from his black coat. He was glad that he had done this when he perceived that a lady was in the living-room, evidently arrayed for an occasion. She was older than Bob Dean, and her pudgy face exhibited the indecisive character of a dumpling. "Sister," presented Mr. Dean. "Lulu—Reverend Hamlin. Set down."

"Happy to meet your sister, sir," murmured the parson.

"Not whole," Bob elucidated. "Half-sister. Same dad—two maws. How's trade?"

"Trade?" echoed Mr. Hamlin blankly.

"Yes," said Bob. "Are you overly busy? 'Cause if you ain't, I got a job for you."

The lady tittered, rocking violently and pretending to hide her blushes behind a coquettish muslin apron.

"Why, Bob!" she gurgled. "You go on like everything was fixed regular."

"So it is," said her brother.

"Don't you believe him, Mr. Hamlin! I ain't nearly made up my mind yet. There's times I

THE WEDDING BOB DEAN RAN

feel as if I had, and there's times I feel as if I hadn't."

"It's fixed," asserted Bob Dean.

Little Mr. Hamlin timidly contemplated the ranchman's lean countenance, and was inclined to agree with the assertion, whatever might be its ulterior significance.

"You mentioned some desire for my assistance, Mr. Dean," he said. "My—ah—services are always at the disposal of any members of this—ah—community, regardless of religious predilections."

Bobs square jaw dropped helplessly.

"Well, 'services'—I sense you on that, anyhow. Services is what we want. Weddin' services. Lulu's goin' to be wed up to Alvin F. Jelfer, o' Fayburg."

"And we ain't had a squint of him in our born days," chuckled Lulu behind the apron.

The clergyman looked grave.

"Shucks! Wait till I tell you," said Dean. "You smoke? No, course not. Well!" He bit a cigar viciously, and proceeded to explain. "A ranch is no place for she folks," went on Bob. "In the way, see-sawin' 'round. No snap to 'em, no get-up-and-get-there-Eli. Lulu, she's all right, far's she goes, but she needs a man every two minutes or so to make up her mind for her. Needs a husband. Well, I cal'lated, a spell back, on Alec Beebe. Nothin' doin'. Beebe couldn't make up his own mind, let alone Lulu's. Then

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Conk Hoover. Conk reneged. He ain't got the spinal column of a smelt. Now, backbone is what hits *me*. Quick stuff, savvy? Yes or no, like that."

He snapped his big fingers. The little parson nodded nervously, while Bob pulled a bundle of documents from a drawer in the table and banged it on the clerical knee.

"So here we got it," he said.

"Got what?" asked the startled Mr. Hamlin.

"Ad in the *Wreath of Hymen*," explained Dean. "Answer from Alvin F. Jelfer, of Fayburg. Letters wrote, photos swapped. All O. K., be here to-morrow. Ever hear o' the *Wreath of Hymen*? Fool name, but a fine paper. Three dollars a year and worth it."

The clergyman scanned the matrimonial journal, with its columns of advertisements of those seeking affinities. Bob Dean puffed his cigar; his sister put the muslin apron again into commission; and Mr. Hamlin presently unfolded a typewritten letter, reading as follows:

ALVIN F. JELFER
REAL ESTATE AND INSURANCE

MISS LULU DEAN,
DEAR MADAM:

Replying yrs, 21st inst., would say (1) 49 next March 6th (2) brownish (3) \$4300 (4) blue, slight cast (5) no (6) immediately on arrival (7) yes. Early answer will oblige, yrs, etc.

"How's that?" exulted Bob. "There's a man, I tell you, that's got a mind of his own. Answers up quick and sharp, just the way I had Lulu put

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them questions to him. Lulu wrote the letters. I told what to say. If I'd left it to her—shucks, her palaver would 'a' stamped a business feller like Alvin F! All his letters was like that, so was hern. You be ready to make the hitch to-morrow? I'll hire Masonic Hall, over the barber-shop."

"To-morrow?" repeated the minister.

"That's what No. 6 means there on the invoice," said Bob Dean. "Immediate on arrival. To-morrow, or next day. Fayburg ain't so mighty far up the river."

The Rev. Mr. Hamlin arose in a sort of daze and shook hands with the hesitant and coyish Lulu.

"I dunno," she wavered. "I dunno as I—"

"So-long, parson," broke in Bob Dean firmly. "The Chinaman'll drive you back. Women are no good on a sheep-ranch, and when I say I'm goin' to run a weddin' you can bet your best shirt it's time to tune up the choir!"

II

The minister had a communicative wife, and the next morning, consequently, in front of the Palace Hotel, Bedelia City joyously awaited the arrival of the bridegroom from Fayburg.

"This here eruption of Dean's," said T. K. O'Hara, "into an affair of connubial bliss, is a sure enough cur'us event. Bob knows as much

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about females as a Hottentot does about ice. They are cert'nly an unknown quantity to him."

Cross-examined, Bob Dean was, as usual, stonily silent. With a cold and impersonal scrutiny he watched the approach of the stage and the emergence therefrom of a loosely built stranger wearing a linen duster and a vacant smile.

Conk Hoover started a cheer, but repressed it when Bob stalked through the crowd and grabbed the traveler's carpet-bag.

"Your name Alvin F. Jelfer?"

"Why, sir, I 'most guess I can say 'tis, and then again, maybe 'tain't."

"Mine's Dean," announced Bob.

"Well, well, well!" cackled Mr. Jelfer shrilly.

"Relative, I kind o' reckon, p'rhaps?"

"Brother," said Bob Dean. "Not whole—half. Same dad, two maws. You come into the hotel and pick out a room."

There are only seven bedchambers in the Palace, and it did not take long for Alec Beebe, the proprietor, at the desk, to indicate to Mr. Jelfer the field of choice. Bob Dean stood by among the observant citizens in the office.

"Hum!" considered Jelfer, stroking a pendulous lip. "I don't always seem to like a south room 'actly—oh, southeast, you say? Well, there's the sun in the mornin', and—I dunno—once I had a north room in Ogden, and 'twarn't so good, real good, that is. Maybe it was in Salt

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Lake—I disremember. West room? Prob'ly I might take that one, and yet—what do you think, Mr. Dean? Was you ever in Ogden?"

"What the— What odds does that make?" demanded Bob. "Here, Beebe, you show him 'round."

The proprietor bore the carpetbag upstairs, and the bridegroom in the linen duster fluttered uncertainly at his heels. From the floor above Jelfer's plaintive voice was heard continuously as he perambulated the hotel; and after a quarter of an hour or so Beebe came down with a red face.

"Took the bunk I showed him first, after all," growled Beebe. "I never did see such a locoed old maverick."

"Landlord!" piped Jelfer from the staircase. "I reckon this next room, come to think of it—I dunno—p'rhaps I'd rather—"

Beebe reascended, a trifle profanely; Bob Dean, surveying the crowd, thrust his hands deep in his trouser-pockets; and Abie Engstein, who was the janitor of Masonic Hall, cleared his throat.

"Want I should fix up the place for this evenin', Bob?" he hinted diffidently.

"Sure!" thundered Dean. "You fix up, and keep fixed up! This weddin' goes. Letters is letters, ain't they? Although," he added, "how that seesawin' jellyfish come to write so like a reg'lar man beats me complete."

The hotel clock struck the hour of noon, and Bob Dean strode to the foot of the stairs.

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"Jelfer!" he called. "We'll start for the ranch. You be ready in five minutes?"

"Well, yes *and* no, Mr. Dean," quavered the invisible bridegroom. "Three minutes, maybe—or maybe ten—or maybe—"

"Five's what I said!" yelled Bob, and he performed an elementary war-dance.

The spectacle of his rage was painful, and we retired to the barroom of the Palace. Wagering began briskly on the likelihood of the wedding ceremony. One party banked on Bob's stubbornness; the other on the fact that, being a woman-hater, he was disqualified from forwarding matrimony.

"And he never can bring that flighty Fayburg moth-miller up to the scratch, nohow," said Conk Hoover, laying his ninth bet.

Toward the middle of the afternoon the decision of the official stakeholder behind the bar was postponed by the arrival of Bob Dean's Chinaman with an oral message for Mr. Engstein.

"Boss says weddy not to-light," jabbered the Chinaman. "Keep hall fixed all same. Weddy to-morrow days."

III

No nuptials, however, gratified Bedelia City on the morrow, nor, for that matter, on the day following; and Hoover and his adherents were jubilant.

Bob Dean, defiant of propriety, had estab-

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lished his prospective brother-in-law, carpetbag and all, in the ranch-house. Scouts returned from the ranch to the hotel with meager information.

"Dean and him and Lulu was roostin' on the veranda this mornin'," reported Alec Beebe to the citizens at the Palace. "I stayed long as I could. Bob was tryin' to get him to settle whether they'd be married with one ring or two rings. 'Twarn't no use. Dean's pale and ga'nted, as if he had been herdin' sheep in a blizzard. Hullo, yonder's the stage! Who's the gal?"

She was a very attractive young woman indeed who descended from the Fayburg stage that noon in front of the hotel, although, with her aggressive chin and straight shoulders, she looked more like a handsome boy than a girl. She wore a serviceable sombrero and a close-fitting khaki dress which made you think of a uniform.

"Morning," she said briskly. "Alvin F. Jelfer here?"

O'Hara spoke up at once; he alleged afterward that his professional instinct immediately scented a scandal.

"Yes, ma'am," responded T. K. "Leastwise he's on a ranch two miles over that divide, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Miss," snapped the girl. "Kate Stark. Hook up a rig for me, anybody?"

"Sure thing," agreed Beebe with a jump.

Miss Stark gazed across the street at the win-

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dows of Masonic Hall, wherein Abie Engstein had tastefully arranged hymeneal festoons of white cheese-cloth.

"Been a wedding?" she asked.

"Going to be," said T. K. O'Hara.

"P'r'aps," drawled Hoover.

The young lady impaled Conk with a glance like the punch of a chisel.

"If you want to bet there isn't," she said, "just you let me know, my friend. Here's my card."

"'Jelfer & Stark,'" read Conk. "'Jelfer & Stark, real-estate and insurance.' Why, dog my cats! You must be his partner!"

"And niece," added the girl. "Now, then, where's the rig? Oh, all right, give me the whip. Bob Dean's ranch, did you say? Never heard of him. Is he father to that snappy-writing Lulu?"

"Half-brother," fluttered O'Hara weakly. "Not whole. Same dad, two—"

"Get up!" cried Miss Stark to Beebe's horse, and she whirled down the road toward the sheep-ranch.

"Well, by jiminetty!" gasped Conk Hoover, fingering the laundry slip which contained his list of bets. "I'm a goin' to hedge, if I can. Yes, sir-ee! I'm a goin' to hedge before evenin'."

The hours moved slowly. Bedelia City suspended its afternoon business and frankly devoted itself to waiting; even the Rev. Mr. Hamlin dallied at the door of the Palace barroom for news. There was no news whatever. Indus-

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trious watchers, surreptitiously patrolling the road in front of Bob's place, saw nothing of the matchmakers or the happy pair.

At eight o'clock Abie Engstein lighted the kerosene lamps in Masonic Hall.

"Ain't been told not to, anyhow," he said. "Might as well be ready. Walk up, folks! And—look out there! What'd I tell you? Here's the parson! Gangway!"

It was, indeed, Mr. Hamlin, in official garb, who squirmed excitedly through the assembled spectators.

"The Chinaman called at my house," he said to Conk. "The couple have left the ranch."

He mounted the platform. Abie's daughter sat down at the melodeon and the citizens decorously arranged themselves against the walls. Hurried footsteps were heard on the stairs. The melodeon wheezed forth the "Washington Post." And Bob Dean, with Miss Stark upon his arm, marched rapidly to the platform and confronted the clergyman.

"Go ahead," he ordered. "Make it short."

"You and—and this—this lady?" blurted Mr. Hamlin, aghast.

"Us," said Bob.

IV

When it was over the bridegroom explained proudly. He seemed very proud and happy, and so did his wife.

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"Why, we've knowed each other for more'n a month, 'count o' them letters she and I wrote," said Bob Dean. "That is, we was stuck on each other's way of doin' things, although up to six hours ago she thought I was Lulu and I thought she was Alvin F. But, at that, six hours is a heap o' time to them that don't seesaw. Al and Lu? Oh, they'll live with us, I judge. We didn't get shet of them, after all, but we've got each other. How's that, Kate?"

"Right," said Mrs. Bob.

HIS FIRST PENITENT

BY JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

HIS FIRST PENITENT

BY JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

IN a white wilderness of moaning storm, in a wilderness of miles and miles of black pine-trees, the Transcontinental Flier lay buried in the snow.

In the first darkness of the wild December night, engine and tender had rushed on ahead to division headquarters, to let the line know that the flier had given up the fight, and needed assistance. They had been gone two hours, and whiter and whiter grew the brilliantly lighted coaches in the drifts and winnows of the whistling storm. From the black edges of the forest, prowling eyes might have looked upon scores of human faces staring anxiously out into the blackness from the windows of the coaches.

In those coaches it was growing steadily colder. Men were putting on their overcoats, and women smuggled deeper in their furs. Over it all, the tops of the black pine-trees moaned and whistled in sounds that seemed filled both with menace and with savage laughter.

In the smoking-compartment of the Pullman sat five men, gathered in a group. Of these, one was Forsythe, the timber agent; two were travel-

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ing men; the fourth a passenger homeward bound from a holiday visit; and the fifth was Father Charles.

All were smoking, and had been smoking for an hour, even to Father Charles, who lighted his third cigar as one of the traveling men finished the story he had been telling. They had passed away the tedious wait with tales of personal adventure and curious happenings. Each had furnished his share of entertainment, with the exception of Father Charles.

The priest's pale, serious face lit up in surprise or laughter with the others, but his lips had not broken into a story of their own. He was a little man, dressed in somber black, and there was that about him which told his companions that within his tight-drawn coat of shiny black there were hidden tales which would have gone well with the savage beat of the storm against the lighted windows and the moaning tumult of the pine-trees.

Suddenly Forsythe shivered at a fiercer blast than the others, and said:

"Father, have you a text that would fit this night—and the situation?"

Slowly Father Charles blew out a spiral of smoke from between his lips, and then he drew himself erect and leaned a little forward, with the cigar between his slender white fingers.

"I had a text for this night," he said, "but I have none now, gentlemen. I was to have married a couple a hundred miles down the line. The

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guests have assembled. They are ready, but I am not there. The wedding will not be to-night, and so my text is gone. But there comes another to my mind which fits this situation—and a thousand others—‘He who sits in the heavens shall look down and decide.’ To-night I was to have married these young people. Three hours ago I never dreamed of doubting that I should be on hand at the appointed hour. But I shall not marry them. Fate has enjoined a hand. The Supreme Arbiter says ‘No,’ and what may not be the consequences?”

“They will probably be married to-morrow,” said one of the traveling men. “There will be a few hours’ delay—nothing more.”

“Perhaps,” replied Father Charles, as quietly as before. “And—perhaps not. Who can say what this little incident may not mean in the lives of that young man and that young woman—and, it may be, in my own? Three or four hours lost in a storm—what may they not mean to more than one human heart on this train? The Supreme Arbiter plays His hand, if you wish to call it that, with reason and intent. To some one, somewhere, the most insignificant occurrence may mean life or death. And to-night—this—means something.”

A sudden blast drove the night screeching over their heads, and the wailing of the pines was almost human voices. Forsythe sucked a cigar that had gone out.

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"Long ago," said Father Charles, "I knew a young man and a young woman who were to be married. The man went West to win a fortune. Thus fate separated them, and in the lapse of a year such terrible misfortune came to the girl's parents that she was forced into a marriage with wealth—a barter of her white body for an old man's gold. When the young man returned from the West he found his sweetheart married, and hell upon earth was their lot. But hope lingers in young hearts. He waited four years; and then, discouraged, he married another woman. Gentlemen, *three days* after the wedding his old sweetheart's husband died, and she was released from bondage. Was not that the hand of the Supreme Arbiter? If he had waited but three days more, the old happiness might have lived.

"But wait! One month after that day the young man was arrested, taken to a Western State, tried for murder, and hanged. Do you see the point? In three days more the girl who had sold herself into slavery for the salvation of those she loved would have been released from her bondage only to marry a murderer!"

II

There was a silence, in which all five listened to that wild moaning of the storm. There seemed to be something in it now—something more than the inarticulate sound of wind and trees.

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Forsythe scratched a match and relighted his cigar.

"I never thought of such things in just that light," he said.

"Listen to the wind," said the little priest. "Hear the pine-trees shriek out there! It recalls to me a night of years and years ago—a night like this, when the storm moaned and twisted about my little cabin, and when the Supreme Arbiter sent me my first penitent. Gentlemen, it is something which will bring you nearer to an understanding of the voice and the hand of God. It is a sermon on the mighty significance of little things, this story of my first penitent. If you wish, I will tell it to you."

"Go on," said Forsythe.

The traveling men drew nearer.

"It was a night like this," repeated Father Charles, "and it was in a great wilderness like this, only miles and miles away. I had been sent to establish a mission; and in my cabin, that wild night, alone and with the storm shrieking about me, I was busy at work sketching out my plans. After a time I grew nervous. I did not smoke then, and so I had nothing to comfort me but my thoughts; and, in spite of my efforts to make them otherwise, they were cheerless enough. The forest grew to my door. In the fiercer blasts I could hear the lashing of the pine-tops over my head, and now and then an arm of one of the moaning trees would reach down and sweep

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across my cabin roof with a sound that made me shudder and fear. This wilderness fear is an oppressive and terrible thing when you are alone at night, and the world is twisting and tearing itself outside. I have heard the pine-trees shriek like dying women, I have heard them wailing like lost children, I have heard them sobbing and moaning like human souls writhing in agony—”

Father Charles paused, to peer through the window out into the black night, where the pine-trees were sobbing and moaning now. When he turned, Forsythe, the timber agent, whose life was a wilderness life, nodded understandingly.

“And when they cry like that,” went on Father Charles, “a living voice would be lost among them as the splash of a pebble is lost in a roaring sea. A hundred times that night I fancied that I heard human voices; and a dozen times I went to my door, drew back the bolt, and listened, with the snow and the wind beating about my ears.

“As I sat shuddering before my fire, there came a thought to me of a story which I had long ago read about the sea—a story of impossible achievement and of impossible heroism. As vividly as if I had read it only the day before, I recalled the description of a wild and stormy night when the heroine placed a lighted lamp in the window of her sea-bound cottage, to guide her lover home in safety. Gentlemen, the reading of that book in my boyhood days was but a trivial thing. I

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had read a thousand others, and of them all it was possibly the least significant; but the Supreme Arbiter had not forgotten.

“The memory of that book brought me to my feet, and I placed a lighted lamp close up against my cabin window. Fifteen minutes later I heard a strange sound at the door, and when I opened it there fell in upon the floor at my feet a young and beautiful woman. And after her, dragging himself over the threshold on his hands and knees, there came a man.

“I closed the door, after the man had crawled in and fallen face downward upon the floor, and turned my attention first to the woman. She was covered with snow. Her long, beautiful hair was loose and disheveled, and had blown about her like a veil. Her big, dark eyes looked at me pleadingly, and in them there was a terror such as I had never beheld in human eyes before. I bent over her, intending to carry her to my cot; but in another moment she had thrown herself upon the prostrate form of the man, with her arms about his head, and there burst from her lips the first sounds that she had uttered. They were not much more intelligible than the wailing grief of the pine-trees out in the night, but they told me plainly enough that the man on the floor was dearer to her than life.

“I knelt beside him, and found that he was breathing in a quick, panting sort of way, and that his wide-open eyes were looking at the

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woman. Then I noticed for the first time that his face was cut and bruised, and his lips were swollen. His coat was loose at the throat, and I could see livid marks on his neck.

“‘I’m all right,’ he whispered, struggling for breath, and turning his eyes to me. ‘We should have died—in a few minutes more—if it hadn’t been for the light in your window!’

“The young woman bent down and kissed him, and then she allowed me to help her to my cot. When I had attended to the young man, and he had regained strength enough to stand upon his feet, she was asleep. The man went to her, and dropped upon his knees beside the cot. Tenderly he drew back the heavy masses of hair from about her face and shoulders. For several minutes he remained with his face pressed close against hers; then he rose, and faced me. The woman—his wife—knew nothing of what passed between us during the next half-hour. During that half-hour, gentlemen, I received my first confession. The young man was of my faith. He was my first penitent.”

It was growing colder in the coach, and Father Charles stopped to draw his thin black coat closer about him. Forsythe relighted his cigar for the third time. The transient passenger gave a sudden start as a gust of wind beat against the window like a threatening hand.

“A rough stool was my confessional, gentlemen,” resumed Father Charles. “He told me the

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story, kneeling at my feet—a story that will live with me as long as I live, always reminding me that the little things of life may be the greatest things, that by sending a storm to hold up a coach the Supreme Arbiter may change the map of a world. It is not a long story. It is not even an unusual story.

“He had come into the North about a year before, and had built for himself and his wife a little home at a pleasant river spot ten miles from my cabin. Their love was of the kind we do not often see, and they were as happy as the birds that lived about them in the wilderness. They had taken a timber claim. A few months more, and a new life was to come into their little home; and the knowledge of this made the girl an angel of beauty and joy. Their nearest neighbor was another man, several miles distant. The two men became friends, and the other came over to see them frequently. It was the old, old story. The neighbor fell in love with the young settler’s wife.

“As you shall see, this other man was a beast. On the day preceding that night of terrible storm, the woman’s husband set out for the settlement to bring back supplies. Hardly had he gone, when the beast came to the cabin. He found himself alone with the woman.

“A mile from his cabin, the husband stopped to light his pipe. See, gentlemen, how the Supreme Arbiter played His hand. The man at-

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tempted to unscrew the stem, and the stem broke. In the wilderness you must smoke. Smoke is your company. It is voice and companionship to you. There were other pipes at the settlement, ten miles away; but there was also another pipe at the cabin, one mile away. So the husband turned back. He came up quietly to his door, thinking that he would surprise his wife. He heard voices—a man's voice, a woman's cries. He opened the door, and in the excitement of what was happening within neither the man nor the woman saw or heard him. They were struggling. The woman was in the man's arms, her hair torn down, her small hands beating him in the face, her breath coming in low, terrified cries. Even as the husband stood there for the fraction of a second, taking in the terrible scene, the other man caught the woman's face to him, and kissed her. And then—it happened. It was a terrible fight; and when it was over the beast lay on the floor, bleeding and dead. Gentlemen, the Supreme Arbiter *broke a pipe-stem*, and sent the husband back in time!"

III

No one spoke as Father Charles drew his coat still closer about him. Above the tumult of the storm another sound came to them—the distant, piercing shriek of a whistle.

"The husband dug a grave through the snow

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and in the frozen earth," concluded Father Charles; "and late that afternoon they packed up a bundle and set out together for the settlement. The storm overtook them. They had dropped for the last time into the snow, about to die in each other's arms, when I put my light in the window. That is all; except that I knew them for several years afterward, and that the old happiness returned to them—and more, for the child was born, a miniature of its mother. Then they moved to another part of the wilderness, and I to still another. So you see, gentlemen, what a snow-bound train may mean, for if an old sea tale, a broken pipe-stem—"

The door at the end of the smoking-room opened suddenly. Through it there came a cold blast of the storm, a cloud of snow, and a man. He was bundled in a great bearskin coat, and as he shook out its folds his strong, ruddy face smiled cheerfully at those whom he had interrupted.

Then, suddenly, there came a change in his face. The merriment went from it. He stared at Father Charles.

The priest was rising, his face more tense and whiter still, his hands reaching out to the stranger.

In another moment the stranger had leaped to him—not to shake his hands, but to clasp the priest in his great arms, shaking him, and crying out a strange joy, while for the first time that

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night the pale face of Father Charles was lighted up with a red and joyous glow.

After several minutes the newcomer released Father Charles, and turned to the others with a great, hearty laugh.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you must pardon me for interrupting you like this. You will understand when I tell you that Father Charles is an old friend of mine, the dearest friend I have on earth, and that I haven't seen him for years. I was his first penitent!"

UNSEEN HANDS

BY HELEN COOPER DOUGLAS

UNSEEN HANDS

BY HELEN COOPER DOUGLAS

FOR a matter of two or three seconds Ellen sat tense, the letter she had been reading still held stiffly in her hand, the tiny coal of her cigarette gleaming oddly against her white face. She peered suspiciously into the shadows of the big living-room. Had she really heard the faint tentative appeal of some one knocking at a door? Or was it only the rapping of a rose-bough in the wind, or the last audible flickering of her neglected fire? She drew her dark house-robe more closely and laughed a little tremulously at her fears. But she felt on the sudden oppressively conscious of the vacant chairs and the empty living-room, generally alive with smoke and laughter and men's hearty hot discussions. She had an uncanny feeling of living presences intangibly but vividly surrounding her. Could it be that some one was hiding in the darkness of the dining-room across the hall? Or lurking behind the Chinese tapestry that draped her davenport? She shivered at the thought. But the comforting silence that settled about her—the suburb silence compounded of distant city hum, the rattle of an occasional train, the whirr of a pass-

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ing automobile—quieted her momentarily shaken nerves; and she turned again to the last lines of the letter in her hand. “Do find a way to help me out! You’ve always had everything, and everything’s always been against me. Your devoted, but desperate and distracted Mae.”

Ellen’s piquant face hardened again into little intolerant lines of distaste. Why should she whose own affairs were so admirably ordered, she who never wandered from the cool paths of good sense and good taste, pay the price of her friend’s deceit and folly? She felt a cold contempt for the too-dramatic tone of the letter and the silly alliteration of its ending. She recalled with a little unconscious gesture of scorn the over-acted tragedy in Mae’s eyes on pressing it into her hands that evening. Ellen was not consciously a Pharisee; but she felt fastidiously aloof from all the ruder forms of sin. An adoring family composed largely of males had early placed her upon a pedestal; from which carefully guarded eminence she had surveyed average humanity with a pretty intolerance; a little Dresden goddess who had never learned her own fragility, and whose idolizing men folk would see to it that she never did. The delicately etched face under the red gold hair was always faintly shadowed with disdain: people—even the people one knew—violated so frequently and so atrociously all the rules of taste and rectitude. And there were so many things one could not do and

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retain the exacting regard of Ellen Kellogg: one could not lie, or powder one's nose in public, or gossip—unduly. And one certainly could not write crudely emotional appeals for money to a woman friend—thereby grossly deceiving one's husband and natural protector in matters financial and otherwise.

How far Ellen might have pursued the frigid trend of these reflections she never knew. A little inarticulate sound of fear leaped unbidden from her lips. She stood with straining eyes and drawn mouth, listening. The furtive knocking was being renewed, unmistakable this time, insistent and urgent. For a second or two she tried to convince herself that Jim was playing a joke—solid, conscientious Jim, who had never played a joke in the whole course of his serious life, and who must even now be in the midst of an impassioned harangue at the big mass meeting for the new City Bonds. If only she had insisted on Kio and Kita's spending the evening at home when Jim was absent! If only she had not refused to attend the mass meeting—in dainty scorn of the perspiringly enthusiastic herd! She turned in the direction of the telephone, but found herself absurdly unwilling to cross her dimly lighted hall with that tremulous sound of knocking in her ear. For one brief second she thought of screaming from a window; but her invincible sense of dignity forbade that resort to womanish methods. And, a little self-contemp-

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tuous of her cowardice, she forced her reluctant feet toward the door.

Once there her hands turned the lock in hasty, feverish response to the pleading summons of the unseen hands on the other side; and she found herself gazing in wide-eyed alarm and only half recognition at the distorted face and haggard eyes of the youth who bolted into her hall, and fumblingly relocked the door before her tongue could find a protest. In the dim light, his twitching features smote her consciousness with a mingled sense of intimate familiarity and utter strangeness.

He pulled himself together with a pitiable effort at self-control: "Bit late for a call," he said with a kind of wilted jauntiness. "Hope I didn't scare you, Nell."

"Nell?" her face froze. "I am Mrs. James Kellogg."

He tried to twist his lips into a smile. "Oh, pardon! I had forgotten the new title. In the old days it was Slattsie and Nellie, you remember? O don't, don't say it!" he rushed on eagerly as she started to interrupt him with a sudden startled gesture of complete recognition, "I know I gave up the right to have your kind for friends long ago. I've been—oh God, I don't know what I've been for the last three years! But I knew this was your house. I've looked at the outside often enough. It's mostly the outside of houses

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I see nowadays. And it came to me on the sudden you might help. It was my last chance, Nell.

He stopped. Even to his distraught mind it was evident that she was not listening. She was gauging the distance between herself and the front door. He put his shaking hand on the knob. "Nell, Nell, don't! Give me a chance! You used to be kind. Do you remember the time you turned your horse on the very edge of the Tunnel Grade so that he wouldn't crush a toad?

She drew her eyes away from the door. The wheedling, familiar tones pierced through her preoccupation of fear with an odd sense of old memories, half-tender, half-distasteful.

"You are very insolent," she said at last slowly, "you must be—you must be drunk."

"Not this time. I only wish I were," he answered more quietly. "Nell, I know you won't understand. You can't. You'll only think I'm a cad for saying it. But sometimes, don't you see, it's you and your kind that help to put a fellow like me in the mire where I am? Don't stop me. I know what you'll say. Even after dad's trouble, you all invited me to things, for a month or two. And then—I don't suppose you meant it—I just got left out. And that time I was drunk at the Acacia Club dance, it wasn't all my fault—but you were the first to cut me after that, Nell." The girl opened her lips to interrupt, but he rushed on impetuously: "Oh, yes, you did,

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you shoved me out of your play world, and so I found another to play in that wasn't so pretty. I know you're good, Nell, and fine—the kind they write about in books. I've always thought that. But how do you know, how do you *know*," the concentrated bitterness of months burned in his voice, "that even *you* would be able to play at life the way you do, daintily, and never going over the edge of things—always just one puff at a cigarette and one little sip at a glass—if the game weren't made so easy for you? Suppose there wasn't anybody there to remind you all the time of the rules? Suppose there wasn't anybody to care how you played the game? Can't you see it's easy enough to be a saint when all around you are unseen hands—your friends and your family and position—that are always holding you up? And that it isn't so hard to be like me when all around you are a lot of unseen hands that just keep pushing you, pushing you down?"

The girl met his eyes for a few moments in troubled silence. Once or twice before she had felt a faint—but very faint—twinge of regret for her summary dismissal of this lad from the ranks of her acquaintance. And once or twice at some gossip's tale of his desperate pace down the primrose path, she had repelled with swift discomfort a haunting sense of guilt. But now, under the spell of his hot words, it suddenly loomed large upon the horizon of her self-content.

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"I understand," she said at last slowly, "you mean that I was one of the unseen hands that pushed. But don't you think you're a coward to blame a girl for the sort of life you've lived?"

"I suppose so, Nell. I knew you'd take it that way," he answered dully. "But it won't matter much what anybody thinks of me soon." The fire had gone out of his eyes. He looked like an old man—the tragic weariness of age grafted upon the slender lines of youth. "They're going to hang me, I guess."

"Hang? What do you mean? Have you—killed some one?"

"I think so, Nell." He passed his hand over his wet forehead. "I bought the revolver to scare him with. I mean Dart Evans. Oh, you don't know him. He isn't the kind you know. He found out some things—I couldn't explain them to you—but he knew how to make them seem a lot worse than they were. And then I owed him some money. He's been hounding me for a long time, and," the words were coming out slowly and stranglingly, "I can't tell you just how it happened. It was down by the Spalding Club to-night. He'd been sneering with a lot of fellows and I thought—" He broke off abruptly, his eyes narrowing to slits, his body stiffening. From somewhere out in the quiet night came the sound of low voices. "It's the police;" he whispered, "I knew they were following."

He crouched to the floor in an uncontrollable

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panic of terror. "Hide me somewhere, Nell, can't you, just this once?"

She drew back with a movement of horror and repulsion at his grovelling attitude. "Don't do that! They can't see you," she whispered sharply, yet melting in spite of herself at sight of the eyes fixed despairingly on her.

"But, Nell, you're not going to give me up? I'm worth just one chance."

She did not reply to the pitiable untruth of this. She scarcely heard it. "I'd like to help you, Frank," she said, shaken by a novel sense of remorse and sympathy that lay outside her experience or power to analyze. "But I can't. There's no place. There's no time. I'm afraid!"

The quiet voices were perilously near when the boy—with a little gesture, half despair, half-determination—pulled himself together. "All right, Nell. Don't bother." He touched the door-knob. "It's all up now, I guess."

But the girl, who was watching him half-fascinated, suddenly slipped her small cold fingers over his—her own face aflame with light. "No!" she whispered. "There is one way. I'll try it." She tiptoed noiselessly into the living-room, drawing him with her, and pointed to the davenport with its dull red draping. At that moment she was conscious of only one sensation—the first reckless, overwhelming emotion of her life—the primordial sympathy of man with the hunted. Here was one who fled; there were those who pur-

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sued. She flew back into the hall, eager to fling the door open before the bell could sound its summons. The two blue-uniformed men on the steps were startled by the apparition of an agitated figure that rushed out into the dusk of the porch, one shaking hand clutching at her throat, the other pointing over to the foot-bridge that connected the Kellogg garden with the grounds of the Pointex Academy. "Oh, it is, it *is* the police! And you'll catch him, won't you?" she cried hoarsely. "He went over the bridge. I could see him by the tear in his coat. It was only five minutes ago — and our telephone's dead — I couldn't get the station! And his eyes—"

"Just a minute, Madame," excitedly interrupted the Majesty of the Law, abruptly cutting short the torrent of incoherency. "What sort of fellow? How did you come to see him?"

She pressed her shaking hands to her forehead to gain a second's time for invention. "He just came in. The door was unlocked. Perhaps he thought no one was at home. And then—and then," she rushed through her narrative in breathless haste, "he held a revolver to my throat, and made me go backwards through the dining-room to the French windows. And he jumped off the porch and ran off there!" She pointed again.

The disjointed narrative presented no apparent difficulty to her listeners. "Good cut off, you see, said the spokesman to his companion, "Saved

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himself going across the lighted square. Just what I thought. Come on, now!" He looked back at the shrouded figure on the dark porch.

"Are you frightened? Do you feel safe?"

"Oh, yes! yes! But do catch him, won't you?"

She listened a moment as the bulky figures receded. A murmur or two reached her, before they stopped in the bushes by the foot-bridge to make their plans: "Got his gun yet." "Gave the judge's wife a good scare."

She went in slowly, and blindly locked the door with elaborate care. The hot spirit of inventive daring which had swept her off her feet was followed by a reaction of nausea and horror. What had she done? What was she going to do next?

The boy rose from behind the tapestry, excitedly, exuberantly: "Gee, Nell, but you're great! and white clear through!"

His easy tones, his ready resiliency, jarred on her. She smiled a bitter little whimsical smile. "White? I feel—red. You see your crime's mine, too, now." Her voice broke hysterically. He flushed. "I know, I know. I'm a dirty cad to drag you into my mess. And I can't ever make it up to you either."

"It isn't that. You don't understand. It's what I've done myself. And, besides, I can't hide you. I've no place; I can't."

"Just for to-night and to-morrow, Nell," he implored glibly, "until I can get word to Arch Dutton. He'd go through hell for me. And it'll

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be a dead cinch for him to get me out, with his machine and his yacht. Then, you see," he hesitated, but the unconvinced blankness of her face drove him on, "Evans had it on the two of us. It'll be money in Arch's pocket to get me out of the country. He has his own secrets to hide."

"You don't understand," she said again. "I can't lie to Jim."

He stared at her blankly. "Well, then, couldn't you put it up to him to help me out?"

"Oh, you are hopeless! Jim, in his position, hide a murderer!" He winced sharply at the word. "Why, Jim would give you up in a minute. You *must* go, now."

There was a long pause. The boy spoke first in one of his quick reactions to decency and courage: "Guess you're right, Nell. May I get out a window or something? You've helped a lot. I bet there's none of the old crowd would have done as much. I'll make out some way."

He stopped abruptly at the wide-eyed tensity of her look, and they stared dumbly at each other, the two young faces almost equally white and stricken: up the walk were coming a man's regular footsteps—vigorous, buoyant, ringing footsteps that beat cruelly on their jangled nerves. They were almost at the door before she whispered despairingly: "It's Jim! Quick, get behind the davenport! I don't know. I won't promise! I won't promise!"

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Mechanically she fluffed her red aureole of hair, and threw aside the sombre house-robe that had covered her white dinner gown. Jim so loved the appealing daintiness and loveliness of her! And she had always played up. She did it now unconsciously. It had become a habit.

A minute later she was in his arms, and his kisses were making little spots of color on her cold cheeks. "Hello! Hello! Sitting up for your wandering boy?" His lips caressed the soft masses of her hair. "What've you been doing, bricktop?"

How should she tell him? How should she begin? How make him understand? She started vaguely, nervously, playing for time: "Oh, I've been moping. And then Mae Strowbridge came in. She had a new hat on, a dreadful hat with orange pompons. And since she went, why, I've just been dreaming of you, and how you were standing before the masses of your admirers, holding them spellbound with your eloquence."

He grinned appreciatively. "You have not. I know what you've been doing. You've been curled up on the davenport with a box of chocolates and the latest tainted novel. Bet you have it hidden under the cushions."

Her startled eyes traveled over his shoulder to the guilty davenport. And there, under the edge of the Chinese tapestry was just visible a foot, a twitching, spasmodic foot—mute but horrifying evidence of the agonized fugitive behind.

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Her husband's voice came from somewhere in the remote distance. "It shows you haven't been thinking about me, because you don't ask why I was late." Fortunately he continued without waiting for her answer. Her tongue felt glued to her palate. "I stopped at the club a moment to hear about the shooting."

"Shooting? What shooting?"

"Oh, a slimy scoundrel named Dart Evans was shot by a fellow who owed him some money. Nobody seems to know much about how it happened. And as usual the police were bumping into each other and everybody else, while their man escaped."

"Do you know him, dear? I mean the man who did the shooting?"

"Oh, I've met him. It was a fellow named Frank Todd. Shouldn't wonder if *you'd* known him at some time or other, goose. Weren't most of the boys in this town kneeling in rows at your feet before I came on the scene?"

She smiled a little wanly. He kissed her again in ready sympathy. "You poor little girl, you're white with fatigue. Let's sit down." And he started to lead her toward the davenport.

But she drew his face down to hers in a little spasm of terror, and kissed his eyes shut with the swift Delilah instinct latent in every pretty woman. "Oh, but I'm so tired sitting, sweetheart! I've been sitting all evening! It seems to me I've been sitting forever! What will they do

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to Frank Todd, if they catch him? Would they hang him—if they caught him?”

“Oh, they’ll catch him all right. As to the rest, I don’t know. Depends on the provocation somewhat. It’s a pity the State should have to spend thousands of dollars determining the exact shade of guilt of a young fool like that.”

“Do you think,” she spoke hesitatingly, “that a boy like Frank Todd has ever had a decent chance? Don’t you remember about his father?”

“Little Softie! Of course he’s had his chance, like any other fellow! What chance did I have in the beginning?”

She shivered a little. How could sane, solid, successful, self-made Jim ever understand? How could he ever sympathize with her new-born, teasing sense of blame for this boy’s fall, her feeling that somehow or other she shared in it?

And at that moment her heart stopped beating in the stupefying clutch of a new terror. A familiar sound of voices on the porch was followed by a vigorous ring of the door-bell. She wanted to burst into hysterical laughter. Why had she not foreseen that this would surely happen? That her clumsy card-structure must inevitably come crashing down about her head in just this way? Why had she not told Jim immediately while she had the chance, and shifted her desperate problem to his shoulders? She let him take his arms from about her and go to the door, without protest, in an utter paralysis of speech and movement.

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His sharp, clear-cut voice from the hall startled her out of her coma: "I don't get you. What do you mean? Frank Todd here?"

She was suddenly, burningly, conscious that it was no longer a question only of her boy-playmate, of the haggard eyes behind the Chinese tapestry. She knew in a flash of crimson shame that she, Ellen Kellogg, always airily scornful of lying and deceit, was now tangled in a hideous mesh of her own weaving. And she must fight her way out alone. There was no one to help, no one to lean on, no one to tell her what to do! And she must betray the trust of one or the other—the husband who had just held her in his arms, or the boy-playmate waiting desperately for the words that would mean Life or Death.

The big policeman turned relieved but slightly puzzled eyes to the white gowned girl who had slipped quietly to her husband's side. "We thought we'd better let you know the man had not been found, Mrs. Kellogg. But a detail has been sent up to the Academy grounds, and another to the lagoon to cut him off there."

The three men faced her expectantly, Jim in open amazement and the policemen vaguely conscious that something in the situation was eluding them. But if she wavered for one frantic moment between a passion of relief that they had not seen through her deception, and an equally passionate longing to throw herself into her hus-

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band's arms and sob out her tale of woe against his shoulder, the gracious piquant smile which met them gave no hint of the inner struggle.

"We're glad to know, of course," she answered evenly. "But I'm afraid I don't quite understand. Why are you notifying *us*?"

"But wasn't it you who opened the door and told us how a fellow had held a revolver to your throat?"

"I? I?" Her voice rose on a note of inquiry and amazement and dropped again to an exclamation of pleased enlightenment. "O, now I understand! I've been wondering about it for the last hour."

"Understand what, dear? What do you mean?" queried Jim impatiently.

She turned to the policeman with a little gurgle of amusement "Was she about my height, with a husky voice and dark cloak and brown hair?"

"Sure, that's her, I think," he answered a trifle dubiously. "The light wasn't none too good, ma'am, but she was about your height, and had some kind of dark coat on. We knew it was the Judge's house, so we thought of course it must be the Judge's lady."

Ellen blessed the dark porch and his male obtuseness to the subtleties of feminine attire, and turned to make explanation to her husband: "You see, Jim, Mae Strowbridge and I had been addressing envelopes for the new Free Dispen-

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sary. We were quite crazy to send them off to-night; so about nine o'clock I took a batch down to the mail-box—the one over on Melrose Street. Mae was going to finish up and then stay all night, on account of Arthur's being South, you know. Well, I couldn't have been gone more than fifteen minutes; but when I got back, there stood Mae on the porch. She said she had such a horrible headache that she just had to go home to her own bed. I thought it was awfully queer; because she hadn't said anything about a headache before. But, of course, it's all perfectly clear now. She was afraid she would frighten me if she told, and she knew she'd tell if she stayed. Poor Mae!"

"Poor Mae!" snorted her husband, "I think it was a rotten shame to go off and leave you alone like that!"

Ellen flushed miserably at this unlooked for comment on her lie, and the big policeman shifted uncomfortably. "That hits me all right, Judge. We shouldn't have left the house unguarded. But we knew he wouldn't come back this way, and the lady herself was so anxious to have us make the capture." He took out his notebook. "What did you say her name was? And her address?"

Ellen could not repress a gasp of dismay. Her innocent little rocket was exploding with deadly consequence. But Jim stepped with

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serene unconsciousness into the breach: "Mrs. Arthur Strowbridge, No. 864 Panoramic Place. That right, Nell?"

"Quite right." Suspicious ears might have caught a note of hysteria in the laugh that followed. "Poor Mae! She *will* be ready for a sanitarium if she's routed out again to-night."

The policeman chuckled. "Oh, we won't disturb her to-night. That's for future use. Not that it matters much. She wouldn't figure high as a witness!" this a bit contemptuously. "She was too darned rattled to know whether she's seen a ghost or an aeroplane." He started toward the steps, but added, "Anyway we know he's headed for the lagoon, through the Academy grounds and over the hills. Two fellows down here on Perrier Street saw him making for your house just before he scared your lady friend with his revolver. Good night!"

The door closed behind them. Ellen knew her taut nerves could not stand another shock without snapping. Jim must be got upstairs immediately. He must not enter the living-room again. She dared not let her own eyes wander to the tell-tale tapestry. She drew him with her toward the stairway.

"Sweetheart," she said appealingly, you mustn't blame poor Mae, and you mustn't ever hurt her by mentioning this. You ought to be glad it wasn't I."

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"I am, angel," he answered fondly. "You'd have been ill in bed. Ugh, the dirty brute!"

She yawned. "Well, I'm not ill, dear, but I'm powerfully sleepy. You run up and take your bath. You're such a wretched poke. And I'll see if Snookums is all right, and put away the papers Mae left."

"Let me stay and help you, goose."

She pushed him gayly up the stairs: "No, I won't elephant. You'd only fuss about and get in my way."

"Oh, very well, young woman. Now we'll see who's the Kellogg Family Poke." He pinched her chin and ran gayly up the stairs.

Ellen waited till her ears caught the sound of a rapidly filling tub. It was quite evident the policeman had had no suspicions. She was safe from that source for to-night. But she would take no chance on the events of another day; and she felt scarcely a second's hesitation at adopting the plan that came into her mind—so swiftly was she slipping down the greased slopes to Avernus.

"Is that you, Mae?" she called softly through the telephone a moment later. It's awfully late, dearie, but I knew you couldn't be asleep with that dreadful debt on your mind. You poor child! It's a pretty big sum, but I think I can manage somehow to help you out. I've been thinking about it all evening. No, no, no! Don't say that! It isn't true. I'm not a love at all.

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And besides I want you to do something for me. You know you've always said you were a winner at obeying orders? Well, I want you to come over the very first thing to-morrow morning, the very—first—thing. Jim leaves early, about seven-thirty, and you must be here exactly at eight. And you mustn't speak to anyone or answer your telephone before you come. Promise now. Oh, I'll explain in the morning. It's too late now. You're sure you won't forget? Sure, now? Because everything, *everything* depends on your doing exactly what I tell you. Good night, dearie, good night. I hope you can sleep."

She listened tensely for the accustomed splash from the bathroom before she crept wearily back, and beckoned mutely to the drawn face that peered above the davenport. The boy tottered out obediently into the room, a bloodshot and nerve-shattered spectacle.

"Quick now!" she whispered, her words trembling out in a frenzy of haste. "I've worked it all out. You must put on this old overcoat of Jim's and go down to the little Grove Way Club house. You know where it is, in back of the Blake grounds. You can climb over our back fence and go down their footpath. Nobody'll look for you there. The key's in that swinging fern basket on the porch. And the janitor's on his vacation. There's a telephone in the little buffet kitchen where you can call up your friend."

He nodded and whispered brokenly:

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"God knows why you've done this, Nell. I'm not worth it. But if it doesn't make a man of me—" He broke off and held out a shaking hand.

She recoiled from him with a shudder of hysterical horror. "Don't touch me! Don't touch me!" The whispered tones were perilously near a scream. "I feel all over blood! And I've lied, I've lied to Jim!"

Something in the dumb misery of his face shot through her own self-agony with a piercing sense of pity for him. "I can't shake hands, Frank, I can't. But I do wish you well. Some day, when you make good, let me know."

He nodded again mutely, followed her out to the French windows, and stepped into the darkness, just as an irate masculine voice called down from above:

"For the love of Heaven, Ellen, what are you doing?"

And a gay feminine voice—a little too gay—retorted:

"For the love of you, I was fixing the morning grape fruit!"

"Didn't I hear you talking to some one?"

"Of course you did. I was scolding Snookums. He's getting dreadfully spoiled. But I'm coming up this minute. And, dear," she leaped desperately to a safer topic as she started up the stairs, "I've got the greatest joke on Murray Judson to tell you. You'll fairly scream."

"I'll fairly snore, you mean," he called back

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drowsily. "I'm almost asleep now. You'd better tell it to Snookums."

She stopped a moment on the stairs and pressed her throbbing forehead against the cool banister. Long afterward she wondered how she ever lived through the months that followed—months of anxiety and dread, until the killing of Dart Evans had become a half-forgotten incident; and until pursuit finally died down into a tacit acknowledgment that one more fugitive had slipped through the hands of the Law.

But that night she was conscious only that a fearful cataclysm separated her from the self she had always known. The impeccable little goddess of yesterday had toppled with a crash from the cool pedestal where she had had her life. Her first excursion into the realms of Reality had found her falling headlong into every pitfall that lay in her path; she had lied, she had borne false witness, she had defied all the traditions of law and order that belonged to her class. A burning flush covered her face, rivalling dramatically the red gold of her hair; but she knew in a lightning flash of self-knowledge that it was not wholly shame. A new warm sense of human adventure, human impulse, human sin, wrapped her like a cloak of fire. She laughed a little wildly. "Unseen hands that push," she whispered, "unseen hands that push!"

THE CHURCHING OF BANKSON

BY SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR.

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I

MR. PAGE-WHYTE, the new English rector of St. Stephen's in the Fields, is popular in his parish. Bankson, nevertheless, ever since one day on the Radnor Links, considers him unscrupulous.

Bankson is a Golfer—and the capital letter expresses Bankson's impartial estimate of his ability as such. Last year his game was threatened by a severe attack of autocitis. Day after day, he twisted a steering-wheel, turning impossible corners, passed stony-faced park guards funereally and other citizens instantaneously, while his conversation reeked with ignition and horsepower.

The result was to be expected. No man can serve two masters, and his golf record climbed steadily toward the century of dishonor.

Finally, however, he saw the error of his ways, and again the golf-links knew him as of old. For long he complained bitterly that there were six inches gone from his swing, and that the form of

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a day that was dead would never come back to him. Moreover, his palate had been so vitiated by Presbyterians, Bronx cocktails, gin rickies, and other religious and rural beverages, that it was many months before he could enjoy the Scotch high-ball that must accompany strictly high-grade golf.

Gradually, however, his hand and palate recovered their lost cunning; and at the time of the event herein chronicled, Bankson quite fancied his game, and was firmly convinced that he should be playing No. 2 instead of No. 5 on the team—an opinion not shared by the captain.

It was at this puffed-up period that he first made the acquaintance of Mr. Page-Whyte on a Monday afternoon at the golf-house. Bankson's expected opponent had telephoned at the last minute that he must perforce practise law that afternoon; and Bankson, much disgusted at such an exhibition of low taste, had come out on the off chance of finding a disengaged player.

Near his locker was dressing a youngish man wearing a clerical stock and a face of impenetrable gravity.

"Looked like a composite photograph of Vice-President Fairbanks, Judge Parker, and Mayor Gaynor on the morning of Judgment Day," was the way Bankson described this expression afterward.

The stranger, with a marked English intonation, inquired whether Bankson had any antag-

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onist. Observing the other's clerical tie and very new clubs, Bankson reluctantly admitted that he had not, and a match was arranged after mutual introductions. The divine drew the honor.

"Is it customary over here to make any—er—small wager on the result of a match?" the rector queried, as he dabbled in the sand-box at the first tee.

Bankson, a confirmed golf gambler, brightened perceptibly.

"Why, yes," he said heartily. "We generally play a ball a hole, or sometimes a box of balls on the match."

"Would the last alternative be acceptable to you?" inquired his opponent with much formality.

"Entirely so," acquiesced Bankson.

The rector drove a straight but rather short ball, was bunkered on his second, and took three puts, going out in six, while Bankson made a bogie of four.

On the second hole, Bankson got off a screaming drive, but dubbed an approach, and took a six. The rector, however, went down a stroke worse.

As they approached the third tee, the rector paused in his stately stride.

"Mr. Bankson," he remarked, "if by any interposition of divine Providence I should be the winner of this match, I would prefer, instead of a box of balls, your attendance at divine service,

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say every other Sabbath during the rest of the year."

"Why, certainly, doctor," responded Bankson, who was two up and felt that he had his opponent's measure.

At the third hole they were delayed by Major Newman, who was playing with Freddie Kent. The major was the terror of the links, a golfer of the old school who exacted the most rigorous observance of technicalities. A sound or movement when he was about to make a stroke was in his eyes a compound of sacrilege, blasphemy, and lese-majesty. Freddie was a gentle creature, who always played a ladylike game in silk stockings and well-shaped legs.

The major, as Bankson and the rector approached, was badly ditched, and his ball showed like a budding water-lily in the mud by the brookside. With a rumble of expletives, he selected a niblick and tried for the green. Freddie was standing apparently safely in his lee, but in some miraculous way the major managed to deposit about a pint of black mud full in Freddie's half-open, sweetly serious mouth.

"Blup! Blup! P-poo-oo-oo-oo!" observed Freddie earnestly.

"Confound you, sir, don't you know you can't talk when a man is making a stroke?" howled the major, infuriated at the sight of his abandoned ball wallowing still deeper in the mire.

Thereupon he proceeded to produce from an

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extensive military vocabulary a selection of ob-jurgations which made even the hardened caddies draw back in wonder and awe. Freddie Kent wiped the mud out of his mouth apologetically, while Bankson would no more have attempted to interfere with the major's flow of language than he would have presumed to proffer a red bandanna to an angry bull.

Not so with the rector. The latter's face grew even graver, if that were possible, at every fresh verbal vagary, and finally he stepped solemnly forward.

"One minute, sir," he remarked impressively to the purpling major. "I am a minister of the gospel, and for the sake of your soul I must protest against such language. Moreover, it seriously interferes with my game. As a well-known expert on the links yourself, I am quite sure you will do nothing which interferes with the score of a fellow golfer."

The major had turned furiously on the rector at the beginning of his address, but the tactful peroration—the major's usual score being about one hundred and twenty—had a mollifying effect.

"I'll take care of my soul personally," he grunted, "but I'll say nothing more if it interferes with your game. Hey, boy!" he shouted to the caddie in the far background, "shut your mouth together and pick up the ball!"

The quieted major and the abused Freddie

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passed on. Bankson holed out in awed silence, and again won by a stroke.

The rector secured a half now and then, but at the end of the first nine Bankson had him five down. As they started for the tenth tee, the clergyman, who seemed to be getting his hand in, cleared his throat in a rather embarrassed manner.

"Is it ever permissible to change the terms of a wager?" he inquired.

Bankson gave him a curious glance.

"It's not customary," he answered coldly; "but if you wish to reduce the stakes, I have no objection."

"You misunderstand me, Mr. Bankson," returned the rector, rather sharply. "I had intended to suggest a trifling increase of the consideration."

"That is certainly a very sporting proposition on your part," returned Bankson, delighted to find that the parson was no welcher; "but as I have you five down, it seems to me that it wouldn't be fair to add to your troubles."

"I feel," returned the other, "that it would be altogether delightful to welcome a man of your force and charm at St. Stephen's every Sunday. Suppose we double the stakes? Say two boxes of balls on the eighteen holes, if I lose the match, and you attend church every Sunday for a year if I should win?"

"Well, it doesn't seem fair," said Bankson,

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who would always rather win a golfball than make ten dollars; but I'm perfectly willing, of course."

"We'll consider that the arrangement, then," said the rector sedately, "beginning with next Sunday—if I win."

"If you win," acquiesced Bankson.

II

Bankson can only explain what happened thereafter on the theory that Providence interfered in behalf of his antagonist in a very unsportsmanlike manner.

The next hole was sown as thickly with traps and gins and snares as the Valley of the Shadow in "Pilgrim's Progress." The rector's drive rolled into one, while Bankson's second shot landed on the edge of the green. The rector selected a niblick, and, after regarding the lie fixedly for a minute, gave the unsuspecting ball such a mighty swipe that it soared out for a hundred yards like a bird, and then gradually fluttered along farther and farther until it lay an inch from the hole. Bankson ran down with the conventional two puts, but the rector had the hole in a three.

The eleventh hole was the Punch Bowl. One had to drive a straight line between a boundary fence on one side and a ditch on the other, and then approach by faith over the brow of a hill.

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The ball might then be on the green, but too, too often it was out of bounds.

Bankson, in his effort to play safe, pulled the ball through a cherry-tree far to one side. His second shot, a great brassy, struck the down slope of the hill, and shot over the fence and out of bounds with exceeding haste. He dropped another; and on his third shot, the ball bounded and hopped and jumped down to the green, an easy put for the hole.

The rector, in the mean time, after attentively observing the formation of the land, had driven with his cleek, a proceeding that made the sensitive Bankson shudder. The ball shot out in a low, straight line, and, as is the wont of cleek shots, seemed willing to run indefinitely. When it stopped, it lay just beyond the red distance flag. A prodigious mid-iron shot, and the ball disappeared over the crest of the hill in a beautiful rainbow curve.

When the two reached the green, Bankson's second ball lay white and unmarred on the sward, but the rector's was nowhere to be seen.

"Hope you're not out of bounds," sympathized Bankson hypocritically.

"I—er—think not," returned the rector, unruffled. "My good fellow, look in the hole," he called to his caddie, who was nosing aimlessly around, trying to look intelligent, after the manner of caddies.

The youth grinned appreciatively, but, seeing

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that the rector was serious, shuffled over to the green. Then followed a shout which showed that even a caddie sometimes unbends. There in the hole lay the missing ball, between the number-shaft and the side. It must have literally trickled in, not to have bounded back when it touched the iron. The rector had taken a three-hundred-and-sixty-yard hole in a two!

"That's going some!" said Bankson shakily.

"Well," responded the rector seriously, "I'm playing with a laudable purpose—to wit, your spiritual welfare. It may be that some higher power approves my motive."

III

"It was from that minute that I began to suspect him," said Bankson, telling the story, afterward, to Tommy Dodd at the Racket Club. "He'd stand and look at the ball every time it would get in a bad lie, and I could see his lips move. Then he'd take one of his shiny new clubs, and simply tear off the distance. A two-hundred-yard carry with any old club was nothing to him, and every one as straight as a side-line. Do you know what he was doin' to me, Tommy?"

"What?" said Tommy, much interested.

"He was prayin'," said Bankson impressively; "simply prayin' his ball into every hole. He got two twos in succession in that nine. No man could do that without prayin', or droppin' a spare

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ball through a hole in his pocket, or something crooked like that."

"Go on!" said Tommy. "I don't believe he was prayin' at all. You can often see my lips move, and hear 'em, too, when I get a bad lie, but no one ever yet accused me of prayin'. Besides, there's nothing in the rules about it," he went on judicially. "You can't ground your club in a bunker, or make a shot off a putting green, or move anything growing, and you oughtn't to press, but there's nothing against prayin' anywhere on the links. Of course," continued Tommy, "if he's disturbin' his opponent, that's a matter of etiquette."

"Well, he disturbed me, all right," said Bankson bitterly. "He certainly was the king bumble-bee when it came to stinging me! I haven't stopped smarting yet. The same thing happened at the Quarry. You know you drive across a brook and up over an old quarry, and there you find a green perched on a mound, and if you're lucky you get a four. He used that infernal cleek of his again from the tee, and the ball lit clear up on the side of the hill, and I thought it never would stop. It went over the top headed toward the hole.

"I drove a gentlemanly and refined ball well up, and pitched my second straight over for the hole-flag. When I got to it, there was my ball dead stymied by the parson's which lay a foot from the hole. I jumped him with my nib-

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lick and went down in three, one under bogie—the finest played hole I ever made. But he had won in another two.”

Bankson paused for breath.

“Say, that must have got your nerve,” sympathized Tommy. “It sure would get mine.”

“Not at all,” responded Bankson. “Your Uncle Dudley simply played the game of his life; yet the best I could do was to halve the next hole in par. The man simply played like a well-oiled machine. When we came to the sixteenth,” continued Bankson broodingly, “he got desperate at the sight of my wonderful game, and lost all sense of decency. It was bad enough before, his using his professional influence in helping out his own shots; but when it came to queering mine, that was certainly the limit!”

“What’d he do?” inquired Tommy breathlessly.

“On the sixteenth hole I lay in a bunker just off the green,” narrated Bankson. “I took my mashie and made a nice, clean, low carry over the bunker that would have landed me dead to the hole. Just as I hit the ball, up from behind the bunker jumped a big, lumbering Newfoundland pup. That ball hit him square, and dropped back into the bunker.”

“You don’t think that dog was sent from heaven as an answer to prayer, do you?” queried Tommy incredulously.

“I have my suspicions,” answered Bankson

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firmly. "At any rate, I told it to go to an entirely different place, and gave it a fine lofting stroke with my mashie; but the damage was done, and the parson took that hole. I entered a protest, but he said that I couldn't have moved the dog, anyway, as he was something growing on the links."

"Say, that was a good one!" cackled Tommy, much pleased.

"Do you know, several times during the match," said Bankson, "I suspicioned that the dominie was something of a wag? His face twitched a good bit after he got through talking to Major Newman, and it puckered up a lot while I was talking to that dog.

"Tommy"—and Bankson's voice here became impressive—"it may have been an accident about those twos, and the dog also may have just been a coincidence; but the last hole showed that there was something supernatural in that match. I had kept my nerve perfectly, in spite of everything, and I was reminding myself of Travis at his best. The seventeenth I took at one under bogie—probably he didn't get his prayer started in time. That left me all square at the home hole. Now, Tommy," continued Bankson, "that hole is the drink-hole, and it's my favorite on the whole course."

"Naturally," observed Tommy rudely.

"I've studied it carefully," went on Bankson, scorning the insinuation, "and I guess I've won

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a barrel of drinks in my time on that hole. The tee just suits me. I always get off a slathering drive, and I've learned just the angle to pitch my second so that it will roll off the hill to the green. Directly behind the tee is a brook, which guards the sixteenth green; and under a ground rule, if you drive into it from a tee, you can pick up for the loss of a stroke. It was my honor." Once more Bankson's voice had a mysterious timbre to it. "I drove as well as I ever did in my life. The ball started all right; then it suddenly met a prayer in mid-air, curved sharp, struck a tree thirty feet off the line to my left, bounced clear back of the tee, and rolled into the brook behind me. I picked out for the loss of a stroke; and there I was, having played two, and lying fifty feet behind the tee from where I started.

"Of course, there was nothing to it after that. The parson won in a walk," finished Bankson brokenly, disappearing momentarily into certain cooling Caledonian depths near at hand.

"Well, that's certainly an unusual anecdote, not to call it something shorter," commented Tommy. "I'd like to meet that parson of yours. Are you sure you haven't touched up some of the details?"

"If you'll look in at St. Stephen's during the next fifty-two Sundays," responded Bankson sadly, "you'll find one detail that's been touched, and that is Mr. Easy Mark Bankson in the family pew. Those were terrible odds I gave him!

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What are two boxes of balls against fifty-two Sunday mornings? There's one comfort, though," and Bankson's face brightened perceptibly.

"And that is?" inquired Tommy.

"He caught every other man on the team in precisely the same way," chuckled his friend. "The fox made each one of us, as we were caught, promise to say nothing to the others. He plays No. 1 now, and the whole team attends church in a body; but I don't know yet whether he's a player or a prayer," ended Bankson.

"I should call him a ringer myself!" said Tommy severely.

IN EACH OTHER'S SHOES

BY GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP

IN EACH OTHER'S SHOES

BY GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP

I

JOHN CROMBIE had taken a room at the new apartment building, The Lorne; having advanced so far in his experience of New York as to be aware that if he could once establish himself in a house associated by name with foreign places and titles his chance of securing "position" would be greatly increased. He did not, however, take his meals in the expensive café of that establishment, finding it more economical to go to an outlandish little French restaurant, some distance away, which had been nicknamed among those of his acquaintance who resorted to it "The Fried Cat." This designation, based on a supposed resemblance to the name of the proprietor, Fricat, was also believed to have value as a sarcasm.

It was with no pleasant sensations, therefore, that Crombie, waking on a gray and drizzling morning of November, remembered that he must hie him to "The Fried Cat" for an early breakfast. He was in a hurry that day; he had a great deal to do. His room was very small and

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dark; he bounced up and dressed himself, in an obscure sort of way, surreptitiously opening the door and reaching vaguely for his shoes, which stood just outside, ready blacked. Nor did it add to his comfort to know that the shoes were very defective as to their soles, and would admit the water freely from the accumulated puddles of the sidewalks. In fact, he had been ashamed to expose their bad condition to the porter when he put them out every night, as he was forced to do, since they were his only pair. Drawing them on hastily, in order to conceal his mortification from even his own mind, he sallied forth; and though at the moment of putting them on a dim sense of something unfamiliar crossed his mind, it was not until he reached "The Fried Cat" that he became fully aware that he had carried off some one else's shoes. He turned up the soles, privately, underneath the low-hanging tablecloth, and by a brief examination convinced himself that the gaiters did not belong to him. The test was simple: his feet were unaccountably dry, and there were none of those breaks in the lower surface of their leather covering which he had so often been obliged to contemplate.

He saw at once that the porter of The Lorne had made a mistake, and must have deposited at another apartment his own very insufficient foot-gear; but there was no chance now to remedy the confusion. Crombie had barely time to reach the office where he was employed.

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On an ordinary occasion he would perhaps have gone back to The Lorne and effected an honorable exchange. This particular day, however, was by no means an ordinary occasion. Crombie had made up his mind to take a momentous step; and it was therefore essential that he should appear at his desk exactly on time.

He was a clerk in an important engraving company. For several years he had occupied that post, without any opportunity having presented itself for a promotion. At the best, even should he rise, what could he expect? To be cashier, perhaps, or possibly, under exceptional circumstances, a confidential private secretary. This prospect did not satisfy him; he was determined to strike for something higher.

It will naturally be inferred that he was ambitious. I am not in a position to deny this; but all I can be certain of is, that he was in love—which is often about the same thing.

Several times at The Lorne he had met in the hallways or in the elevator a young lady, who was in no small degree beautiful, and charmed him still more by her generous presence, which conveyed the idea of a harmonious and lovely character. She had light hair and blue eyes, but these outward attributes were joined with a serenity and poise of manner that indicated greater stability than is attributed, as a rule, to individuals of her type.

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Once he happened to arrive at the main entrance just as this vision of beauty emerged to take her place in a coupé which was waiting by the curbstone. She dropped her card-case upon the sidewalk, and Crombie's heart throbbed with delight as he picked it up, gave it to her, and received her smiling thanks for his little service. Another time, as he was descending in the elevator, a door opposite the shaft, on the second floor, stood open, and he caught a glimpse of the apartment to which it gave access. The room was finished in soft tints, and was full of upholstery and hangings that lent it a dim golden atmosphere. In the middle of it stood the young girl, clad in the palest blue, above which her hair shone like a golden cloud on some dim evening sky.

Slight occurrences of this sort had affected him. He learned that she was the daughter of Littimer, the rich, widowed banker: her name was Blanche.

II

In these new, stout shoes that did not belong to him Crombie trod with a buoyancy and assurance strongly in contrast with the limp and half-hearted pace to which his old, shabby gaiters had formerly inclined him. He rattled down the stairs of the elevated station with an alacrity almost bumptious; and the sharp, confident step that announced his entrance into the company's

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office made the other clerks quite ashamed of their own want of spirit.

He worked at his desk until noon; but when the bells of Trinity rang twelve in solemn music over the busy streets, he dropped his pen, walked with a decisive air the length of the room, and, opening a door at the other end, presented himself before Mr. Blatchford, the treasurer, who was also an influential director. "Crombie, eh? Well, what is it?"

"I want to speak with you a moment, sir."

"Anything important? I'm busy."

"Yes, sir; quite important—to me. Possibly it may be to you."

"Fire away, then; but cut it short." Mr. Blatchford's dense, well-combed gray side whiskers were directed toward the young man in an aggressive way, as if they had been some sort of weapon.

Crombie nonchalantly settled himself in a chair, at ease.

"I am tired of being a clerk," he said. "I'm going to be a director in this company."

"I guess you're going to be an inmate of a lunatic asylum," Mr. Blatchford remarked with astonished cheerfulness.

"That seems as unlikely to me as the other thing does to you," said Crombie.

Hereupon Mr. Blatchford became sarcastically deferential. "And just about when do you propose to become a director?" he asked.

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"In the course of a month. The election, I believe, takes place in December."

"Quite right," said his senior, whose urbanity was meant to be crushing. "Meanwhile, you will need leisure to attend to this little matter. Suppose I oblige you by saying that the company has no further need of your services?"

"Suppose you do. What then?"

Mr. Blatchford gave way to his anger. "What then? Why, then you would have to go; that's all. You would be thrown out of employment. You would have to live on your principal, as long as there was any; and afterward you would be obliged to find some other work, or beg, or borrow, or—"

"That's enough," said Crombie, rising with dignity.

"No, it isn't," the treasurer declared, "for you don't seem to understand even now. I discharge you, Mr. Crombie, on the company's behalf, and you may leave this office at once."

Crombie bowed and went out. "I'm going to be a director, all the same," he told Mr. Blatchford before he closed the door. Then he collected the few articles that belonged to him from his desk, and departed, a free man. He had his future to himself; or else he had no future worth speaking of; he wasn't sure which. Nevertheless, he felt quite happy. Such a result as this had seemed to him, in the prospect, hardly possible; but now that it had arrived he was not discom-

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fited. Unbounded courage seemed to rise from the stout soles of the alien boots, percolating through his whole system. He was surprised at himself. He had intended to use more diplomacy with Mr. Blatchford, and it was no joke to him to lose his place. But instead of feeling despondent, or going at once in search of new employment, he cheerfully went about making calls on several gentlemen who, he thought, might be induced to aid in his ambitious project. His manner was that of a person sure of his powers and enjoying a well-earned leisure. It had its effect. Two or three stockholders of the company joined in agreeing with him that improved methods could be introduced into its management, and that it would be a good thing to have in the board, say, two young, fresh, active men—of whom Crombie, by reason of his experience and training, should be one.

"I own a little stock," said the deposed clerk, who had taken the precaution to obtain a couple of shares by great effort in saving. "Besides, not having any other engrossing interests at present, I could give my whole attention to the company's affairs."

"Quite so," said the merchant whom he was addressing, comfortably. "We must see if we can get together a majority; no time to be lost, you know."

"No, sir. I shall go right to work; and per-

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haps you will speak to some of your friends, and give me some names."

"Certainly. Come in again pretty soon; will you?"

Crombie saw that he had a good foundation to build upon already. Blatchford was not popular, even among the other directors; and sundry stockholders, as well as people having business with the company, had conceived a strong dislike of him on account of his overbearing manners. Therefore it would not be hard to enlist sympathy for a movement obnoxious to him. But it was imperative that the self-nominated candidate should acquire more of the stock; and to do this capital must be had. Crombie did not see quite how it was to be got; he had no sufficient influence with the bankers.

The afternoon was nearly spent, and he trudged uptown, thinking of the ways and means. But though the problem was far from solved, he still continued in a state of extraordinary buoyancy. Those shoes, those shoes! He was so much impressed by their comfort and the service they had done him in making a good appearance that he resolved to get a new pair of his own. He stopped and bought them; then kept on toward The Lorne, carrying his purchase under his arm without embarrassment.

On regaining his modest apartment he sent for the boot-boy, and inquired the whereabouts of his missing shoes.

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"Couldn't tell you, sir," said the servant. "Pretty near all the men's boots in the house has gone out, you see, and they'll only be coming back just about now. I'll look out for 'em, sir, and nab 'em as soon as they show up."

"All right. Whose are these that I've been wearing?"

The boy took them, turned them over, and examined them with the eye of a connoisseur in every part. "Them? I should say, sir, them was Mr. Littimer's."

Crombie blushed with mortification. Of all the dwellers in the Lorne, this was the very one with whom it was the most embarrassing to have such a complication occur; and yet, strange inconsistency! he had been longing for any accident, no matter how absurd or fantastic, that could bring him some chance of an acquaintance with Blanche.

"Take these boots, dry them right away, and give 'em a shine. Then carry them up to Mr. Littimer's rooms." He gave the boy a quarter: he was becoming reckless.

Now that he had embarked upon a new career, he perceived the impropriety of a future director in the Engraving Company going to dine at "The Fried Cat," and so resolved to take his dinner in the gorgeous café of The Lorne. While he was waiting for the proper moment to descend thither, he could not get the shoe question out of his mind. Surely, the boot-boy could not have

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been so idiotic as to have left that ancient, broken-down pair at Littimer's threshold! And yet it was possible. Crombie felt another flush of humility upon his cheeks. Then he wandered off into reverie upon the multifarious errands of all the pairs of boots and shoes that had gone forth from the great apartment house that day.

Breaking off from these idle fancies at length, he went down to the café; and there he had the pleasure of dining at a table not far from Blanche Littimer. But, to his surprise, she was alone. Her father did not appear during the meal.

III

The fact was that the awful possibility, mere conjecture of which had frightened Crombie, had occurred. Littimer had received the young man's shoes in place of his own.

They happened to fit him moderately well; so that he likewise, did not notice the exchange until he had started for his office. He believed in walking the entire distance, no matter what the weather and to this practice he made rare exceptions. But he had not progressed very far before he became annoyed by an unaccustomed intrusion of dampness that threatened him with a cold. He looked down, carefully surveyed the artificial casing of his extremities, and decided to hail the first unoccupied coupé he should meet. It was some time before he found one; and when

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finally he took his seat in the luxurious little bank parlor at Broad Street, his feet were quite wet.

His surprise at this occurrence was doubled when, on taking off the shoes and scrutinizing them more closely, he ascertained that they were the work of his usual maker. What had happened to him? Was he dreaming? It seemed to him that he had gone back many years; that he was a poor young man again, entering upon his first struggle for a foothold in the crowded, selfish, unhomelike metropolis. He remembered the day when *he* had worn shoes like these.

He sent out for an assortment of new ones, from which, with unnecessary lavishness, he chose and kept three or four pairs. All the rest of the day, nevertheless, those sorry Congress boots of Crombie's, which he had directed his office-boy to place beside the soft-coal fire, for drying, faced him with a sort of haunting look. However much he might be occupied with weightier matters, he could not keep his eyes from straying in that direction; and whenever they rested on that battered "right" and that way-worn "left," turned up in that mute, appealing repose and uselessness at the fender, his thoughts recurred to his early years of trial and poverty. Ah! how greatly he had changed since then! On some accounts he could almost wish that he were poor again. But when he remembered Blanche, he was glad, for her sake, that he was rich.

But if for her sake, why not for others? Per-

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haps he had been rather selfish, not only about Blanche, but toward her. His conscience began to reproach him. Had he made for her a large life? Since her mother's premature death, had he instilled into her sympathies, tastes, companionships that would make her existence the richer? Had he not kept her too much to himself? On the other hand, he had gratified all her material wants; she could wear what she pleased, she could go where she chose, she had acquaintances of a sort becoming to the daughter of a wealthy man. Yet there was something lacking. What did she know about old, used-up boots and all that pertains to them? What did she know about indigence, real privation, and brave endurance, such as a hundred thousand fellow-creatures all around her were undergoing?

Somehow it dawned upon the old banker that if she knew about all these things and had some share in them, albeit only through sympathy and helping, she might be happier, more truly a woman, than she was now.

As he sat alone, in revery, he actually heaved a deep sigh. A sigh is often as happy a deliverance as a laugh, in this world of sorrows. It was the first that had escaped Littimer in years. Let us say that it was a breathing space, which gave him time for reflection; it marked the turning of a leaf; it was the beginning of a new chapter in his life. Before he left the bank he locked the door of the private parlor, and was alone for two or three

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minutes. The office boy was greatly puzzled the next morning, when he found all the new pairs of shoes ranged intact in the adjoining cupboard. The old ones were missing.

Littimer had gone away in them, furtively. He was ashamed of his own impulse.

This time he resolutely remained afoot instead of hiring a carriage. He despatched a messenger to Blanche, saying that sudden business would prevent his returning to dinner, and continued indefinitely on his way—whither? As to that he was by no means certain; he knew only that he must get out of the beaten track, out of the ruts. For an hour or two he must cease to be Littimer, the prosperous moneyed man, and must tread once more the obscure paths through which he had made his way to fortune. He could hardly have explained the prompting which he obeyed.

As it chanced, he passed by "The Fried Cat"; and, dingy though the place was, he felt an irresistible desire to enter it. Seating himself, he ordered the regular dinner of the day. The light was dim; the tablecloth was dirty; the attendance was irregular and distracted. Littimer took one sip of the sour wine—which had a flavor resembling vinegar and carmine ink in equal parts—and left the further contents of his bottle untasted. The soup, the stew, and the faded roast that were set before him, he could scarcely swallow; but a small cup of coffee at the end of the repast came in very palatably.

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In default of prandial attractions, Littimer tried to occupy himself by looking at the people around him. The omnifarious assembly included pale, prim-whiskered young clerks; shabby, lonely, sallow young women, whose sallowness and shabbiness stamped them with the mark of integrity; other females whose specious splendor was not nearly so reassuring; old men, broken-down men, middle-aged men of every description.

"Some of them," Littimer reflected, "are no worse than I am. But are any of them really any better?"

He could not convince himself that they were; yet his sympathies, somehow, went out toward this motley crowd. It appeared to him very foolish that he should sympathize, but he could not help it. "And, after all," was the next thought that came to him, "are we to give pity to people, or withhold it, simply because they are better or worse than ourselves? No; there is something more in it than that."

Leaving "The Fried Cat" abruptly, he betook himself to an acquaintance who, he knew, was very active in charities—a man who worked practically, and gave time to the work.

"Do you visit any of your distress cases to-night?" he asked.

"Yes, I shall make a few calls," answered the man of charity. "Would you like to go along?"

"Very much."

So the two started out together. The places

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they went to were of various kinds, and revealed a considerable diversity of misfortune. Sometimes they entered tenement houses of the most wretched character; but in other instances they went to small and cheap but decent lodgings over the shops on West Side avenues, or even penetrated into boarding-houses of such good appearance that the banker was surprised to find his friend's mission carrying him thither. All the cases, however, had been studied, and were vouched for; and several were those of young men and women having employment, but temporarily disabled, and without friends who could help them.

"You do well to help these beginners, at critical times," said the banker, with satisfaction.

It was almost the same as if he were receiving relief himself. Who knows? Perhaps he was; but to the outward eye it appeared merely that, with his friend's sanction, he was dispensing money and offers of good-will to the needy. What a strange freak it was, though, in Littimer! He kept on with the work until quite late in the evening, regardless of the risk he ran by continuing out-of-doors when so ill shod.

IV

Having waited a reasonable length of time after dinner, Crombie again left his room, resolved to make a call upon Mr. Littimer, on the

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plea of apologizing for having marched away with his shoes.

He would not run the risk, by sending his card, of being denied as a stranger; so, notwithstanding much hesitation and tremor, he approached the door which he had once seen standing open, and knocked. A voice which he now heard for the second time in his life, but which was so sweet and crept so naturally into the centre of his heart that the thought of it seemed always to have been there, answered: "Come in." And he did come in.

"Is Mr. Lit—is your father at home?" It seemed to bring him a little nearer to her to say "your father."

Blanche had risen from the chair where she was reading, and looked very much surprised. "Oh," she exclaimed, with girlish simplicity, "I thought it was the waiter! N-no; he hasn't come home yet."

"I beg pardon. Then perhaps I'd better call later." Crombie made a feeble movement toward withdrawal.

"Did you want to see him on business? Who shall I tell him?"

"Mr. Crombie, please. It's nothing very important."

"Oh," said Blanche, with a little blush at her own deception, "haven't I seen you in the house before? Are you staying here?"

She remembered distinctly the incident of the

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card-case, and how very nice she had thought him, both on that occasion and every time she had seen him. But as for him, his heart sank at the vague impersonality with which she seemed to regard him.

"Yes, I'm here, and can easily come in again."

"I expect my father almost any moment," she said. "Would you like to wait?"

What an absurd question, to one in his frame of mind! "Well, really, it is such a very small matter," he began, examining his hat attentively. Then he glanced up at her again and smiled: "I only wanted to—to make an apology."

"An apology!" echoed Blanche, becoming rather more distant. "Oh, dear! I'm very sorry, I'm sure. I didn't know there'd been any trouble." She began to look anxious, and turned her eyes upon the smouldering fire in the grate. So this was to be the end of her pleasant, cheerful reveries about this nice young man. And the reveries had been more frequent than she had been aware of until now.

"There has been no trouble," he assured her, eagerly. "Just a little mistake that occurred; and, in fact, I was hardly responsible for it."

Blanche's eyes began to twinkle with a new and amusing interpretation. "Ah!" she cried, "are you the gentleman who—" Then she stopped short.

Crombie was placed in an unexpected embarrassment. How could he possibly drag into his

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conversation with this lovely young creature so commonplace and vulgar a subject as shoe-leather! Ignoring her unfinished question, he asked: "Do you know, Miss Littimer, whether the—a—one of the servants here has brought up anything for your father—that is, a parcel, a—"

"A pair of shoes?" Blanche broke in, her eyes dancing, while her lips parted in a smile.

"Yes, yes; that's what I meant."

"They came up just after dinner," Blanche returned. "Then you *are* the gentleman."

"I'm afraid I am," Crombie owned, and they both laughed.

Blanche quietly, and with no apparent intention, resumed her chair; and this time Crombie took a seat without waiting to be invited again. Thus they fell to talking in the friendliest way.

"I can't imagine what has become of papa," said Blanche. "He sent word, in the most mysterious manner, that he had an engagement; and it is so unusual! Perhaps it's something about the new house he's building—up-town, you know. Dear me! it does make so much trouble, and I don't believe I shall like it half as well as these little, cosey rooms."

The little, cosey rooms were as the abode of giants compared with Crombie's contracted quarters; but he drew comfort from what she said, thinking how such sentiments might make it possible to win even so unattainable an heiress into some modest home of his own.

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"You don't know till you try it," he replied. "Just think of having a place all to yourself, belonging to you."

Blanche lifted her eyebrows, and a little sigh escaped her. She was reflecting, perhaps, that a place all to herself would be rather lonely.

"You have never met my father?" she asked.

"No. I have seen him."

"Well, I think you will like him when you know him."

"I don't doubt it!" Crombie exclaimed with fervor, worshiping the very furniture that surrounded Blanche.

"I hope we may become better acquainted."

"Only I think, Mr. Crombie, he will owe *you* an apology now."

"Why?"

"For keeping your shoes out so late."

"*My* shoes!" said the young man, in surprise.

"Why, yes. Didn't you know they came to him? The porter said so."

Crombie grew red with the sense of his disgrace in having his poverty-stricken boots come to the knowledge of the banker. Really, his mortification was so great that the accident seemed to him to put an end to all his hopes of further relations with Blanche and her father.

"Oh, I assure you," he said rising, "that makes no difference at all! I'm sorry I mentioned the matter. Pray tell Mr. Littimer not to think of it. I—I believe I'd better go now."

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Blanche rose too, and Crombie was on the point of bowing a good-night, when the door opened, and a weary figure presented itself on the threshold; the figure of a short man with a spare face, and whiskers in which gray mingled with the sandy tint. He had a pinched, half-growling expression, was draped in a light, draggled overcoat, and carried an umbrella, the ribs of which hung loose around the stick.

"There's papa this moment!" cried Blanche.

Crombie perceived that escape was impossible, and, in a few words, the reason of his presence there was made known to the old gentleman.

Littimer examined the visitor swiftly, from head to foot—especially the foot. He advanced to the fire, toasted first one and then the other of the damp gaiters he had on, and at length broke out, in a tone bordering on reproach: "So you are the owner, are you? Then my sympathy has all been wasted! Why, I supposed, from the condition of these machines that I've been lugging around with me half the day that you must be in the greatest distress. And, lo and behold! I find you a young fellow in prime health, spruce and trim, doing well, and perfectly happy."

"I can't help that, sir," retorted Crombie, nettled, but speaking with respect. "I confess I was very happy until a moment or two ago."

"What do you mean by that?" the other demanded, with half-yielding pugnacity. "Till I came in—is that the idea?"

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"Oh, papa!" said Blanche, softly.

"Well, honey-bee, what's the matter?" her father asked, trying to be gruff. "Can't I say what I like, here?" But he surrendered at once by adding: "You may be sure I don't want to offend any one. Sit down, Mr. Crombie, and wait just a few moments while I go into the other room and rejuvenate my hoofs, so to speak—for I fear I've made a donkey of myself."

He disappeared into an adjoining room with Blanche, who there informed him artlessly of Crombie's consideration and attentiveness in restoring the errant shoes. When they came back Littimer insisted upon having the young man remain a little longer and drink a glass of port with him. Before taking his departure, however, Crombie, who felt free to speak since Blanche had retired, made a brief statement in satisfaction of conscience.

"You hinted," he said, "that you judged me to be doing well. I don't want to leave you with a false impression. The truth is, I am not doing well. I have no money to speak of, and to-day I lost the position on which I depended."

"You don't tell me!" Littimer's newly roused charitable impulses came to the fore. "Why, now you begin to be really interesting, Mr. Crombie."

"Thanks," said Crombie; "I'm not ambitious to interest people in that way, I told you only because I thought it fair."

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"Don't be touchy, my dear sir," answered the banker. "I meant what I said. Come, let's see what can be done. Have you any scheme in view?"

"Yes, I have," said Crombie, with decision.

Littimer gave a grunt. He was afraid of people with schemes, and was disappointed with the young man's want of helplessness. Dependence would have been an easier thing to deal with.

"Well," said he, "we must talk it over. Come and see me at the bank to-morrow. You know the address."

V

The next day Crombie called at the bank; but Littimer was not there. He was not very well, it was said; had not come down-town. Crombie did what he could toward organizing his fight for a directorship, and then returned to The Lorne, where he punctually inquired after Mr. Littimer's health, and learned that the banker's ardor in making the rounds among distressed people the night before had been followed by reaction into a bad cold, with some threat of pneumonia. Blanche was plainly anxious. The attack lasted three or four days, and Crombie, though the affair of the directorship was pressing for attention, could not forbear to remain as near as possible to Blanche, offering every aid within his power, so far as he might without overstepping the lines of his very recent acquaintance. But

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the Littimers did not, according to his observation, number any very intimate companions in their circle, or at least had not many friends who would be assiduous in such an emergency. Perhaps their friends were too busy with social engagements. Consequently, he saw a good deal of Blanche, and became to her an object of reliance.

Well, it was simply one of those things that happen only in fairy tales or in romances—or in real life. Littimer recovered without any serious illness, and, after a brief conference with Crombie, entered heartily into the young man's campaign. Crombie showed him just what combinations could be formed, how success could be achieved, and what lucrative results might be made to ensue. He conquered by figures and by lucid common-sense. Littimer agreed to buy a number of shares in the Engraving Company, which he happened to know could be purchased, and to advance Crombie a good sum with which to procure a portion of the same lot. But before this agreement could be consummated, Crombie, with his usual frankness, said to the banker:

"I will conceal nothing from you, Mr. Littimer. I fell in love with Blanche before I knew her, and if this venture of mine succeeds, I shall ask her to become my wife."

"Let us attend to business," said Littimer, severely. "Sentiment can take care of itself."

Their manœuvre went on so vigorously that Blatchford became alarmed, and sent an ambas-

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sador to arrange a compromise; but by this time Crombie had determined to oust Blatchford himself and elect an entirely new set of men, to compose more than half the Board, and so control everything. He succeeded.

But Littimer did not forget the charitable enthusiasm which had been awakened by a circumstance on the surface so trivial as the mistake of a boot-boy. He did not desist from his interest in aiding disabled or unfortunate people who could really be aided. Some time after Crombie had achieved his triumph in the Engraving Company, and had repaid Littimer's loan, he was admitted to a share in the banking business; and eventually the head of the house was able to give a great deal of attention to perfecting his benevolent plans.

When the details of their wedding were under discussion, Crombie said to Blanche: "Oughtn't we to have an old shoe thrown after the carriage as we drive away?"

She smiled; looked him full in the eyes with a peculiar tenderness in which there was a bright, delicious sparkle of humor. "No; old shoes are much too useful to be wasted that way."

Somehow she had possessed herself of that particular, providential pair; and, though I don't want anybody to laugh at my two friends, I must risk saying that I suspect Mrs. Crombie of preserving it somewhere to this day, in the big new house up-town.

THE RETURN

BY I. K. FRIEDMAN

THE RETURN

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ANGELO PASCELLA stepped into Rosaura Pascella's wine room, and seating himself at one of his mother's tables, placed his carpet-bag on the floor and called for *pranzo con mezza bottiglia de vino*, dinner with wine. The card-playing, eating, drinking, arguing Italians ceased their diversions long enough to take a look at the new-comer.

He was a swarthy, healthy, prosperous looking fellow, whose twenty-five years perched carelessly on his shoulders, as if perfectly willing to make room for a twenty-sixth. There was nothing in his looks, dress or manner that entitled him to a second glance, and no suspicion of vexing mystery arose in the minds of Rosaura's patrons to spoil the flavor of the *sphagetti importati*, or to interrupt the flow of wine and words and cards.

Madre Pascella, whose small shrewd eyes were boring through the stranger's carpet-sack to inventory the contents thereof, seeing a prospective patron in the stranger, hastened to wait on him herself, after soundly scolding the servant

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for not paying better attention to the wants of her customers—this rather to impress the stranger than to reprove the servant.

Angelo, on his part, marveled much at the little change that had taken place in his mother's appearance in the thirteen long years of his absence from home. She had grown somewhat stouter, the masculine growth on her upper lip was darker and thicker (those who spoke behind her back called it *un mostacchio*), her hair had lost its raven-like blackness, her face was a little more wrinkled, and that was all. Rosaura Pascella came of a stock that withers and dries, rather than dies.

The place, unlike its owner, was much the worse for wear; the plaster on the ceiling and walls was ready at any minute to fall on the floor, and seemed to beg for the support of props to prevent a tumble so disastrous. The floor had sagged under the heavy weight of the refrigerator and the clumsy pine bar; and both bar and refrigerator had arrived at that point of decrepitude where painting and repairing are too expensive to be practicable. The benches, tables and chairs—some minus an arm, some minus a leg, and some minus both—were the same ones around which Antonio had romped and played when a boy.

"Evidently the madre has not prospered since I left home; everything is going to rack and ruin," he reflected on looking around. Then,

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thinking of his own material success, "I shall put things to rights in less than no time."

When the mother placed the *pranzo* on the table, her son found it difficult to keep from throwing his arms around her, kissing her and crying, "*Mia carissima.*" But he held the reward of a more brilliant and sudden surprise before his eyes, and restrained himself.

He did not know whether to feel sad or glad because she did not recognize him after an absence of only thirteen years. He knew her, forsooth! He gladdened himself with the reflection that he had out-handsomed her recollection, and ate on in silence, his eyes fixed on his plate. Ah! but the dish of spaghetti was fine, a motherly welcome in itself; and he smacked his lips and smiled contentedly. She was standing behind him with her arm folded, waiting for a chance to speak; she saw the smile and broke in abruptly, "How do you like it?"

"Fine," he answered, "just like my mother used to make," and he looked her straight in the eyes.

She bowed acknowledgment like one used to being complimented, and for whom one compliment is of as little value as another.

"I see," said she, pointing to the bag, "that you are from a distance."

"Yes, from New Orleans"—the words slipped from his lips inadvertently and he wished that he could recall them.

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"Ehi! New Orleans!" The mere mentioning of the name changed her from an inquisitive questioner into a most voluble informer. She had a son there in the fruit business with her brother. A fine lad he was, too! He had left home when a boy of twelve and had been gone thirteen years. It was her only child; how she yearned to see him again, her boy! He might know him, his name was Angelo Pascella?

Angelo shook his head.

"No?" she thought every Italian in New Orleans must know her boy. He had prospered, he was rich, he was influential. He had promised over and over again in his letters to come home and spend a few days with his old mother, but the years had gone by and still he did not come. Ah! if he only knew the pleasure his return would bring her, but young men were forgetful and—

Some one at the further end of the room called for a bottle of wine, and her chatter was interrupted.

Angelo looked through the room wistfully to see if he could not discover some old friends of his boyhood days. They were all gone, the old familiar faces, or, at least, none of them was there. A feeling of the transitoriness of things, of separation from the life of which he had once been a component part, touched him with a vague sense of loneliness. His coming home had made him homesick, and he yearned to grasp his sack

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and start for New Orleans again. Then he blamed himself for not revealing his identity—a word from him and presto! all would change; his mother's arms would entwine lovingly about his neck, and his old friends would come crowding on the scene as if raised by magic. He would do it, surprise or no; but the sudden announcement ought to be surprise enough.

A diminutive, round-shouldered, bow-legged Italian entered the room and arrested Angelo's attention. He had seen a face like that somewhere, but he could not associate it with any particular place or time. But the legs? There was only one pair of legs in the world that bowed like those; surely enough, it must be little Pietro del Re, the tailor. Many an hour had he passed in the little tailor's basement shop, an ever welcome guest, listening to stories and descriptions of Italy and its wars.

He caught Pietro's eye and beckoned to him. "Would he have a glass of wine?" In a few minutes they were talking of the golden memories of the days gone by. Angelo felt his way carefully, and when the opportune moment came he discovered his identity. Pietro gave his head a jerk which made the rings in his ears dance. "What!" he exclaimed, "you don't say, you—!"

The sentence was never finished save in the mind of the speaker, for Angelo clapped his hands over the mouth of the surprised tailor. "Hush!" whispered he, "I want to surprise her,

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and you will spoil it all." This mysterious action did not escape the attention of the madre, who was watching them from behind the bar.

"And you mean to say that she don't know you?" he jerked his thumb over his shoulder to designate the "she."

Angelo shook his head. "No, but I think I will tell her later, when the others are gone and we are left alone."

Pietro proposed a better scheme. Angelo's was not half dramatic enough to suit the imaginative tailor's conception of what a theatrical surprise should be. Angelo must go directly to bed; and he, Pietro, would immediately betake himself home. In the morning he would arise early and gather all the old friends, Cassaretto, Barretti, Salvino, De Stefano, and a host of others whom Angelo had known since his boyhood and about whom he had just been questioning Pietro. They would all assemble at the Osteria dell Gallo (the Inn of the Cock), and apprise the madre who her guest really was. Then she would rush upstairs, enter her son's room and have him wake in her arms; and when the mother and son came downstairs the crowd would give them a rousing welcome.

"*Come vi piace?*" he asked.

Angelo rolled a cigarette, lighted it, and thought awhile.

"*Molto moltissimo,*" he answered, blowing the cloud of thin smoke away.

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The tailor shook hands, and arose for an immediate transaction of his part of the bargain.

At the doorway Rosaura stopped him—"Who is the man, why did he put his hand over your mouth to prevent you from speaking?"

An imaginative mind is of service in more ways than one; Pietro manufactured a very plausible lie on the spur of the moment. "He is a rich man, a very rich man, his pockets are lined with gold. When he told me how much he had, 'What! so much as that!' I was about to cry, and up goes his hand over my mouth. You see, Madre Pascella, he knows me to be an honest man; of the others he is not so sure. Good-night."

Rosaura was still reflecting on how much truth there might be in the tailor's lie when Angelo approached and asked to be shown to his room. Here was an opportunity to make this stranger show the material with which his pockets were lined, and to prove him a Cræsus, or Pietro del Re a liar.

"The rules of the house are to pay in advance," she said authoritatively, her hands on her hips.

The stranger smiled quietly, drew a fat roll of bills from the inside pocket of his vest and paid the amount demanded in a way that said, "And I wouldn't care if it were a little higher."

The sight of it made her eyes ache and the palms of her hands itch. There was more than

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enough in that one roll to pay her year's rent, and in the morning Carlo Neppi, the landlord, would be around clamoring for his money; and Neppi was terrible when the rent was not ready, all counted out in dimes and quarters and dollar bills—he would throw her into the streets, and give her a shrug of his shoulders for sympathy.

She lit a kerosene lamp, and opened the door that shut the saloon from the winding stairway which led to the lodging-house above. As they were moving down the narrow hallway toward the room designated for Angelo, he gave way to a sudden impulse, caught her round her ample waist and kissed her. "Go away, fool!" she cried, shoving him vigorously against the wall. She entered the room, put the lamp on the wash-stand, and made her exit without even wishing him good-night.

It was the room he had occupied when a boy; the wash-stand, the bed, the stool, all looked as if they had been waiting for him, and a Murillo Madonna, a cheap, dust-mellowed lithograph, beamed a welcome home from her place on the wall. There was little enough in that bare room about which old memories could cluster; but they clung all the more closely to the small space available, like vines that put forth their creepers to mass their foliage about a single nail in an old wall.

Just below his window, which looked on the street, the signboard (a cock with the inscription

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"Osteria dell Gallo") was creaking loudly as it swayed back and forth in the wind. Angelo regulated the creaking to the refrain, "Wel-come home, wel-come home," and his imagination made the inanimate cock crow the words softly. The refrain soon lulled him to sleep.

Downstairs Rosaura was bubbling over with impatience; it seemed to her that midnight, the hour for closing, would never come, and that the loiterers would never go.

"It is past twelve; come, pay; it is very late, I must close or disobey the ordinance," she said to Enrico Grassi, who was telling her for the tenth time how Paolo Cherino had cheated him out of the last game of *morra*, and how Paolo, and not he, should pay for the last drinks.

"In a minute, just a minute, and I have done," repeated the excited Enrico. "When a man has only a half thumb and bends it half-way, it would take the devil himself to tell whether it was up or down. 'Four,' says I! 'Three,' says Paolo, 'you pay.' Now Madre, I leave it with you if—"

"I care not whether it was up or down, Paolo has gone and you must pay!" cried the bored and impatient hostess.

"Well," said Enrico, with a shrewd smile, "you are like the rest of them, you are in the conspiracy to cheat me. Charge it!" and out he went with a slam of the door.

"It was worth the price of two glasses of wine to be rid of the fellow," she reflected philosophi-

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cally, as she locked the door and turned the lamps out.

She moved up the stairs as carefully as if each inch of the way were connected by wire with bells, and the slightest jar would start the bells ringing and awaken some restless sleeper.

When in her room she removed her shoes and walked cautiously, on tiptoe, to the door that divided Angelo's room from her own, and pressed her ear against it. She heard the sleeper's deep and regular breathing, significant of one who has a light heart and an easy conscience for bedfellows. "He sleeps too soundly," she thought, "for a man with so much money."

She drew the bolt quietly, bent her knee against the panel of the door, waited a second in breathless suspense; then pressed forward quickly and turned the knob; the door opened as noiselessly as if the hinges had been oiled.

His bed was just opposite the door, and she could see every line of his youthful face by the light cast from the lamp that she had left burning low on a chair in the centre of her own room.

She advanced to his bedside slowly, slowly; the distance was but a few feet; to her it seemed as many miles. He had his vest buttoned over his woolen nightgown; it was the object of her search, and she noticed it before anything else. She bent over him so closely that she could feel the moisture of his breath on her hot cheek.

As Rosaura stood thus, holding her stiletto in

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her right hand, and firmly and gently unbuttoning his vest with her left hand, it seemed to her that she had seen the man before. So forcibly did the idea strike her that she paused in the very heat and excitement of the action to scan the sleeper's features more closely.

He turned on his side as if troubled by her searching stare and buried his face in the pillow.

She raised her stiletto, ready to strike if he awoke. His breathing continued regular and rounded as the ticking of an oscillating pendulum.

Then with one quick movement of the stiletto she ripped his vest down the back, and the heavier half of the garment, the half with the purse, she removed by a single tug.

In an over-anxiety to secure her treasure without awakening him, she let the stiletto slip and it pricked him in the back. He awoke with a start. Fearful lest he cry aloud, she grasped him by the throat with her long, knotty, masculine fingers, and the battle began for the supremacy between mother and son.

The son was the stronger, but the mother had all the advantages of position, forewarning and forearm. He used his strong arms for levers and tried to raise his body to a sitting posture. Her grasp tightened, and he felt the life-breath being choked out of him as she forced him on his back. He swung his left arm out in a half circle and struck her a staggering blow on the temple;

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she reeled, stretched out her long arm and caught the bed-post to save herself from falling.

Angelo sprang to his feet, and was on the floor in almost the time it took Rosaura's arm to reach out and grasp for support. He recognized his assailant and stood terror-stricken, dumfounded, paralyzed. "*Madre mia, madre mia!*" he gasped plaintively, beseechingly. The stiletto was drawn back, flashed, and leaped straight to his heart.

She crept on her hands and knees to the hall door, opened it and listened. The living were as silent as the murdered; the dead and the sleeping could tell no tales.

Pietro's sleep was by no means as sound as that of Angelo. He tossed about restlessly the whole night, laying his plan of attack for the great surprise on the morrow; for Pietro was a simple soul who made the most of one of those rare opportunities that gave him half a chance to appear of importance in the community.

He had made his plans a score of times, and changed them just as often; he would go for Antonio Salvino first and have him summon Gustavo de Stefano, and Gustavo and Antonio could summon those who lived south of the Osteria; while he, himself, could gather those who lived in another direction. No, he would go first to Gaetano Negrini's, that would save time, for although Gaetano lived a little further away, he was much the younger man and could move much

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the quicker. To have them assemble there together at seven o'clock to the minute, that was a task which would require skilful manœuvring! Rather than be one minute late, Pietro preferred being three hours ahead of time, and the dawn had preceded him only a few minutes when he made his way toward Negrini's domicile.

As he passed the Osteria he was surprised beyond measure to see Rosaura assisting two burly, desperate-appearing Italians (entire strangers to Pietro) to shove a long pine box on a rickety express wagon.

"Something always goes wrong," he growled. "I wonder what business she has to nose about at this hour! Something to do with Angelo, I'll wager. She always finds out everything, the Madre."

"A distinguished-looking visitor we had last night," he began tentatively.

She was so surprised to see him there that she almost let her end of the box fall.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Pietro? And what are you doing around at this time of day?" She shouted some unnecessary directions to the assistants to hide her discomposure.

"I was about to ask the same question of you," answered Pietro guardedly.

"That's my affair," she retorted sharply.

The timid tailor stood abashed, and for want of something better to relieve his embarrassment,

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he repeated abstractedly, "A distinguished-looking visitor we had last night."

She flushed perceptibly and relaxed her hold on the box. "Take care!" cried one of the men.

"What visitor?" She shifted her position so that her back was turned to the interrogator.

"Why, the young man, the good-looking chap with the carpet-bag."

"Oh, he—how should I know who he was? He went away last night." Her dark face flushed again and she felt the blood beat at her temples; she blessed her good sense for having turned her back to his face.

At last the box was on the wagon, and the two desperadoes jumped on the seat and drove rapidly toward the south.

"Gone away! A nice trick to serve me! All my pains for nothing. I wonder if she tells the truth?" he muttered.

Rosaura stood on the edge of the curb watching the wagon until it passed from sight, then she turned toward the house. Pietro stood thinking what tactics he would employ to gain the truth.

"You there yet?" she said, turning around. "I thought you had gone long ago."

"I—I am not sure whether I understand," answered Pietro, apologetically. "Did you say he went away?"

"Of course I said so. Have you grown deaf; do you want me to repeat it a dozen times?"

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She was again the master of her expression, or rather of her inexpression.

"Did he tell you where he was going? Did he leave his name? Did he tell you when he would return?"

"Why should he tell me such things; what am I to him? I gave him his lodging and he paid me; there our business ended."

"But, Madre Pascella, I know who he was; I will give you ten guesses, and if you guess right, I will treat to a bottle of your best when he returns; and if you don't guess the treat is yours. Come, now," said Pietro in one breath, anxious to surprise Rosaura and have a part of his glory at least, since the full measure had been denied him.

The blood left her dark cheeks and she blanched visibly. Had he suspected something? Was he trying to bulldoze her into a confession and hush-money? She would show him with what kind of a *man* he was dealing.

"Guess, guess! Do you think I have nothing better to do than to stand here on the sidewalk and waste my precious time guessing with an old fool when I have breakfast to get for twenty?" She pushed him to one side and started toward the door.

The awed tailor (it takes nine tailors to make a man, the world over), fearing lest some one else, waiting inside with the surprise all ready, might cheat him out of his hard-earned reward,

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and seeing his dream of glory fade into nothingness, hastened to say: "Madre Pascella, it was your son Angelo; he told me so last night in the wine room. That's why he put his hand over my mouth. 'Angelo, you!' I was about to cry. 'Hush, you fool,' says he, and up goes his hand over my mouth. Yes, it was Angelo, and I alone am in the secret; in me alone—"

"*Dio del Cielo!*" cried Rosaura, and fell swooning to the ground.

BONDAGE

BY LEILA BURTON WELLS

BONDAGE

BY LEILA BURTON WELLS

MRS. RANDALL quietly and without excitement of any kind folded the letter she had been reading and slipped it into its waiting envelope, holding the flap down with careful patience, for she told herself that if she could cover up that one sentence she could think; and it was necessary for her to think, and think quickly—*very* quickly, for now the words she had been trying to hide seemed to be oozing through the paper, deriding her effort to efface with a material act a mental impression. They were standing out as plainly as if a supernatural hand had traced them there: “You will have to tell your husband. . . .”

She arose and, going to the waste-basket, tore the envelope with its hidden letter three times straight across, watching the white strips flutter from her hands. Then, with the instinctive fear of detection that inevitably follows a secretive act, she glanced hastily over her shoulder.

No one had entered. She turned back to the basket and, seeing on one of the torn fragments, “You will have to tell . . .” she knelt down and, picking out each separate strip, tore it into

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smaller pieces—wondering, as she watched her slender fingers, at their passionless deliberation. She might have been destroying a dinner invitation, for all the emotion they evidenced. She felt a sudden hatred for her body, that quiet body that she had trained to present always such a smiling and placid front.

She got to her feet and, going over to a small art-mirror that hung between the two windows, studied her reflected image with un pitying criticism. The atmosphere of stillness that hung about her seemed to penetrate even to the woman in the glass. The lace was not moving over her bosom; her hands, as she raised them to put back a stray lock, moved like drugged butterflies—the very folds of her dress hung peacefully, seeming to whisper against the floor as she stepped. Yes, she had conquered her body—but had she ever conquered her mind? Was her mind still? Or was it, at this crucial moment, like an untuned instrument, hideous with unuttered discords?

How easy for one who had not walked hand in hand with a glorified love to say, “Tell your husband.” How easy for a woman like her adopted mother, who had lived an ordinary life with an ordinary man; who had worked and hoped and striven, and got up and gone to bed, with the dull, drab thing she called life, to say, “Tell your husband.” A wan smile of self-pity touched her lips. The tearing of that letter had been, after all, but the dearth-stroke of a strong swimmer

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who makes a final if quite useless effort to stem the tide of an ocean. It was an incompetent little act, for she would have to tell him, or let him hear through the crueller voice of publicity.

With a sudden impulse she noticed, as she turned from the glass, the tragic and beautiful blackness of her hair where it dipped into little glossy pools as the waves sank downward; the tiny mole that rested under her eye with indicative coquetry; the white skin running into the white dress so softly that there seemed no dividing-line between flesh and cloth; the fine, true lines of her neck and head and bosom and hips—lines drawn so surely that it seemed an artist must have etched them in dry-point. She noted all these things, and for the first time with a calculating eye. Up to this exact moment she had never used any of the cheaper arts to hold her husband's love—their intercourse had been builded far above that, on the supersensible bulwarks of spiritual communion. Now she knew that she was cravenly wondering if her beauty would not offer her an undeserved protection.

But even as she realized that the impulse was finding formative being in her mind, she turned from it with loathing, and, going over to the huge center-lamp that had shed its kind light down on her shoulders for so many happy evenings, she pulled the silken cord and let the rosy light, like a released firefly, burst into the little room.

This was a room to which the world had been

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very kind. It was loving and lovable, as if nothing harsh had ever happened in it. With a contraction of the heart she noted each perfect article which bore, like a bill of sale, its invisible story of love and privation. How they had worked and stinted to buy that luxuriously long sofa that stretched its length so comfortably before the fireplace! How often they had walked past that very lamp when it had reposed in haughty isolation in the window of a Fifth Avenue shop; and how often they had placed it mentally, before they had ever dreamed of placing it actually, on the book-laden library-table that fitted its side into the back of the sofa with such carefully careful ease. And that smoking-set—how she had cleaned laces and gloves, and washed waists and handkerchief, and saved and calculated, to secure that coveted treasure for him; and how interminably he had worn a thin and shiny summer overcoat to surprise her with those old bookcases, at whose shrine she had worshiped for so many patient months. No, it seemed quite, quite impossible that any cruel thing should happen here.

The little clock on the mantel-shelf was striking five . . . and then she heard the servant go to the front door of the apartment. Instantly there was a sudden tensing of her mind, as if every loose ribbon of thought were gathered toward a common center. It was at this hour always that the evening paper was brought in.

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She heard the heavy door open and shut—and then a silence. The steps were retreating toward the kitchen. She called:

“Ellen.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Didn’t the evening paper come?”

The maid stepped to the door of the dining-room. “No, ma’am.”

“I particularly wanted it.” She noted, as she spoke, with a subconscious and separate sense from the one that was writhing and fencing with her life tragedy, the young, unlined face under the white cap, and wondered, with an absurd mental irrelevancy, if Ellen had ever been unhappy; her face looked so very smooth and slick and soft.

“Perhaps Mr. Randall will bring one home.” The girl’s voice was indifferent.

“Oh, no!” Her mind quickly leaped to the defensive. “He *never* buys the paper—he always reads it here.” And then, with lightning rapidity, she calculated the unforeseen probability of his buying an early edition on his way from the office—even while she was directing the girl to “look again in a few minutes.”

“Strange the paper should be late to-night,” she marveled.

“Oh, it often is, ma’am.”

“Is it?”

“Oh, often—they leave it at the other apartment.”

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She watched the girl go away, and then she passed over to the table and picked up a book and began turning over the pages. It was a sardonic commentary on life that she should stand turning over the leaves of a book in the warm security of her own home, and yet know that here, where she had reigned a sovereign, she would be nailed upon the cross; here she would be stripped of all things, destitute as a beggar, going down before the relentless cruelty of life. Before the breaking of another day her life would be the target for the unpitying eyes of publicity—and not her life alone, but, through her, her husband's, her children's. And the knowledge that was paralyzing her was not that *she* could not avert disaster, but that no earthly hand could do it. When she told her husband, he must stand, even as she was, foolishly idle.

She heard his key turning in the lock, and, gently laying down her book, went forward to meet him—went forward as she had gone so many happy times, with the old winging steps of welcome, for this was one of their happy hours. Outwardly nothing was changed. She had the same outstretched hands, the same smile, was folded in the same strong arms! It seemed at the moment both cruel and kind that everything should be so utterly usual. She felt as if, through that white, still body of hers, he must feel a different mind, as if he *must* have some sense of apprehension—of fear. But no—he was even

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laughing as he pulled off his snow-covered coat, *laughing*. . . .

She started to pass through the door, but he pulled her back into his arms and, bending her head away, pressed his lips to the soft flesh under her throat, his happy eyes seeking hers in the dusk.

At that moment she wished, for his sake, that she might even confess to a desecrated body—take the shame wholly to herself; that she might say, “I love another man; let me go—” It would be easier.

Unconsciously her hands tightened proprietorially on his coat, but he was already passing into the other room, looking around with contented eyes, as he asked:

“Where are the children?”

She found herself answering the customary question without any apparent effort: “It is Ellen’s evening out, you know. They are having supper early.”

“I had forgotten.” He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out some bulky packages, flinging them on the center-table as he passed. “I got these for them as I came along, from a man in the street—almost frozen, poor beggar. They’ll amuse them—especially the dancing lady.” He opened the door of the bedroom. “I’m going to change my coat before dinner.” He flung the words over his shoulder as he disappeared.

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She stood by the center-table unwrapping the bulging bundles, the lamp-light falling across her waist so that her slim whiteness seemed to be cut in two by its dividing glow. She loosened the string, took off the paper, and looked down—just a cheap, befurred monkey chasing itself up a string, and a ballet-girl with a key in her back so she could dance—and dance she must when the key was turned, even if her little wooden heart was breaking! Not much difference between a human being and a mechanical toy, she thought. Was not she herself hopelessly dancing because the key of life had been turned by an invisible hand?

“Aren’t they dandy?”

Her husband had come to the door and was watching her. “It’s a circus to see the lady tango.” He turned toward the hall.

Her mind instantly flew to intercept him. “Where are you going?”

“Just to get the evening paper.”

“It didn’t come.” She wondered that her voice could be so still.

“That doesn’t matter.” He was feeling in his pocket. “I bought an extra. I only had time to glance at the headlines. I want—”

But she interrupted him with a little cry. He turned quickly toward her. She was holding out the toy in her hands. “I can’t wind it up,” she complained, “and I want to see the lady dance.”

“Hold on—” She quickly picked up the paper

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as he flung it down, and at the same moment resigned the toy to his hands. "You are winding it the wrong way."

She came close to his shoulder, holding the paper behind her. "I haven't spoiled it, have I?" Where should she put the paper? How should she keep him from reading it?

He was bending his dark head over the childish bauble, the eternal boy struggling through thirty years of manhood.

"You shouldn't have touched it until I showed you." He knelt on the floor and began winding the key.

She dropped the paper over the back of the sofa, and pulled a pillow over it, with a little indrawn breath of relief, for she heard the voices of the children.

Then, as one who watches from a great spiritual distance, she saw herself going through the simple routine of home life—saw herself kneeling with him on the carpet, watching the tiny painted toy prancing around to a musical tune; heard the rapturous shouts of the children; watched them romping with their father. Usually she asked him not to play quite so noisily, but to-night she said no word—for was it not the last time that she would see those chubby arms clasped around his neck, those yellow heads so close to his dark head?

Because the maid was going out he helped her put the baby to bed, and she noted, as he bent

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over the crib, how stern his face was, now that the lines of laughter were smoothed out of it, how deep the lines between the eyes, how determined the jaw.

Then she sat opposite him at the round, candle-lighted table, and listened while he detailed some humorous happening at the office, and as she listened a sudden fear of the impenetrability of the flesh assailed her. How dense was that fleshly substance when she could sit opposite him for six years in the closest possible union, and yet be thinking secret, separate thoughts! Her body, her love, her allegiance she had abandoned to him utterly, but she had withheld her thoughts. She had been afraid to give her thoughts, for even as mankind looks with a certain shame on a naked body, so it shrinks from looking on a naked thought; and with a little thrill of bewildered fear she realized that a thought could *never* be exposed. He could take from her her hope, her happiness, her honor, her life—but her withheld thoughts could not be wrested from her. With the hangman's noose about her neck she would still be a free thinker. Even the law could not electrocute, guillotine, or hang her thoughts. She would go down into darkness, if she so willed, defiantly thinking, thinking, thinking.

And as she looked across the table at her husband's face she could have wept had not tears been so utterly impotent—wept at the facility with which she, who would have laid her body

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down and had it mangled to spare him a pang, had crucified him with her hidden thoughts.

"It seems to me you are looking very pretty to-night," he observed, watching her idly through the rings of tobacco smoke floating ceilingward—watching happily that secret, separate thinker that was his wife. "Is that a new dress?"

"This!" The feminine instinct was so strong that for the first time she presented to him a fully focused mind. "This!" touching it with disdainful fingers. "Why, it is a million years old."

She arose from the table as she spoke, and he, flinging down his napkin, followed her.

"Well, its antediluvian tatters are very becoming—or is it because you have so much color to-night?" He caught her by the arms and turned her toward the small art-mirror. "Look! You remind me of the princess in the story-book who was 'as white as snow, and as black as ebony, and as red as blood—'"

She looked up in face, recoiling from the words in horror. Should she tell him *now*? Now, while his eyes were kind; now while he was smiling at her, now while he was within reach of her arms? But even as she grappled with hesitation the maid brought in coffee.

He went over to the fireplace and held out his hands to the blaze, and she turned mechanically to the little silver tray. She wondered whether, on the Day of Judgment, if some one should bring

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in coffee, she would rise with the same reluctant ease and pour it out?

"You needn't wait for the tray, Ellen," she heard herself saying in her even, tranquil voice. "I will carry the things into the pantry."

And then she heard the girl cross to the dining-room—heard her close one intervening door after another—and she knew she was alone with her husband, quite alone. She no longer had any excuse for waiting.

She heard the snow-laden wind beat against the window-pane, heard the crackling fire-sparks as they were hurled up through the chimney into the frozen world outside; and she carried the little Dresden cup over to his side, as she had carried it so many times before, with the same soft, sure steps.

He had taken some letters from his pocket and was sorting them out and placing them in careful, separate packages.

"Evidence in the Woodhall divorce case," he explained, laconically, as she stood there silently waiting; and then, as she put the cup down on the arm of the sofa, he turned back to his work with the absolute preoccupation of the trained lawyer.

She stood there silently, her hand resting on the arm of the sofa. How should she tell him? How could she *begin*? How penetrate the impregnable armor of his unconsciousness? There must be some way to prepare—some introductory

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word—some little simple thing to say, that would uncover—that would show! She looked down at the letters in his hand, with an almost inane detachment from the subject-matter, though she knew the case well. She asked:

“Do they— Will they—*exonerate* her—in any way?” She was putting the words together blindly, her mind aflame with her own cruel cause.

“Exonerate her!” He snapped the band about the letters with contemptuous finality. “You *couldn't* exonerate a woman with *that* blood.” He threw the letters on the table and reached for a cigarette. “It’s the old story—a rotten woman—and the devil to pay!”

Then she saw that he had taken a cue from the hand of accidental circumstance and given it to her. She turned away her face and closed her eyes.

“Are you absolutely *sure* that she was a bad woman?” she asked.

He shrugged his shoulders. “It depends upon what you call bad. If a bad woman is one who is foredoomed to contaminate everything she touches, she was a bad woman.”

“Foredoomed—”

“Well, the kindest thing he could have done, for his children’s sake and his own, was—to have put her out of the way—”

“Killed her, you mean?”

He nodded.

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There was a little shocked silence, while she heard the wind beat against the window-pane, heard her own breathing.

Then she said: "Is that what *you* would have done—? Things are—sometimes—a little different—when they touch us personally. Would you—would *you* have killed her?"

He shrugged his shoulders with a man's lack of interest in improbabilities. "I? Oh, I would never have to make that decision."

Then she knew that her hour had come, and she crossed over to the little stool by the fireplace, where she could sit facing him. "I know a case," she began, stoically.

"The exception to the rule?" His voice was derisive. He bent to strike another match.

"I don't know whether *you* will think it the exception to the rule, but—it is an indicative case, for the girl made what you would call a bad beginning. You see, her father shot her mother in a fit of insane rage, caused by a belief in her infidelity—shot her mother through the back, when she was bending over, putting some clothes away in a chest in the attic, and then went and gave himself up to the authorities. . . . When the neighbors found them the woman was quite dead and the little two-year-old girl was playing in her mother's blood—dabbling it over her white dress—making finger-prints on the sunlit floor—"

"Horrible!"

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"Yes, but you see she didn't know—she was quite unconscious. She would have been glad, if she had had a choice, to begin life some other way—but you see she wasn't given one. . . ."

"Well?" His lazily contented voice seemed to reach her from a great distance.

She started.

"Was the father tried?"

"Oh, yes—he was tried." She steadied her voice. "He was tried for murder in the first degree. The defense pleaded—insanity!" She tightened her hands in her lap at that word. "But he was found guilty and sentenced to be—hanged. . . . A childless lady traveling in the state with an invalid husband, adopted the child and took her away. There were no relatives."

"And the father was executed?"

She lifted her stoical eyes. "Oh, no. You see, that would not have been so far-reaching in its results. Oh, no, he was not executed. Friends made a strong appeal for pardon, and the governor reprieved him for a year—"

"And then?"

"Kept reprieving him year after year until he went out of office." She was speaking automatically, as a child speaks who is repeating a lesson. "The succeeding governor followed the same precedent during his term of office. So did his successor—"

"Extraordinary!"

She drew a pained breath. "Yes—it was ex-

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traordinary—but you see that is why it is true. The strange things are always true. . . . But the tragic part was the child. She grew up knowing nothing of her parentage. You see, five years after the—the—murder, the lady returned home, widowed—with a little girl, whom she *said* was her own. It looked very safe and simple, and the girl grew up as any girl might, surrounded by love and indulgence; and the years passed—and lovers came. . . .”

“I see!” Her husband’s eyes were contemplative.

“Yes—it all worked inevitably toward the end. Lovers came—but there was something different in her lovers from those of other girls. They stayed for a little while, and then they just went away. You see the lady had to tell them the truth—”

“Of course.”

“—and they were not willing to take the risk. But the girl couldn’t understand. She used to look in the mirror and wonder if she were hateful, or unlovable, or queer. She couldn’t understand; and for the first time she was unhappy. And then the man she loved came into her life—”

“Yes—” He was leaning forward, interested at last.

“He did not go away!”

“Ah!”

“The mother did not tell him. . . . You see,

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the girl was what you might call temperamental, and her love for this man filled her life as water fills a bowl. She was happy. She used to write the word 'wife' on a little piece of paper and kneel before it as a saint kneels before a shrine. . . . Then, the night before she was married, the woman who had made herself her mother told her all. She wanted to shift the burden of decision. She was afraid. And so into the startled innocence of that girl's mind she poured the whole story—the whole cruel inheritance that was hers she laid upon the girl's shoulders, and told her she could choose! She could tell the man she was to marry and he would go away as the others had gone away; or she could close her lips. She closed her lips."

"She *married* him?"

"Yes. You see she, too, was afraid. She thought she would lose his love. She was so young. She couldn't take it all in at once. She only knew she *wanted* him—that he was hers. She was just a girl. What did heredity and the curse of blood and jealousy and murder mean to her? She was only conscious of love."

"Common honesty might have meant something to her."

"Yes. But you see she didn't quite realize then what she was doing. Her adopted mother had made her think she was secure—that nothing, no exposure or disgrace, would ever come. That her father was obliterated, and that even when he

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was hanged there would be no exposure for her, because so few knew the truth of her birth. And the girl was intoxicated with love, just as a man is intoxicated with wine. . . .”

“And the man?”

“He was happy, too. . . . It seems strange, but he was. You see, he loved her. He took her away to a strange city, and they had one little room in a boarding-house, for they were very poor. But poverty didn’t matter to them at all, they were so happy. They used to make a joke of it, and laugh at the tired faces of the rich people they saw riding by in carriages, and then—her baby was laid in her arms.”

He nodded comprehendingly.

“And she began to think! Up to that time she hadn’t *thought*, you see. . . . She used to lie with the little soft head pressed against her breast, and go over all the terrible inheritance the world has said a mother such as she must give her children. And then the arrainging realization came to her, that this was *his* child, too, and that he had had the right to select the mother to his child—and that she had taken it away from him.”

“Rather late in the day to come to that conclusion!”

“Yes, that was what she told herself, that it was too late—*all* too late! The child was born. He could divorce *her*—but the child was born, and she was its mother! . . . And all she had to give it was a heritage of hatred and jealousy and

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murder, and—insanity; and she was afraid! Oh, so bitterly afraid . . . afraid with a terrible, blind, helpless fear. . . .

“Then one day in a sentence in a book she came across the word ‘overcome.’ It seemed to stand out like the point of a needle pricking through cloth. It let in an overwhelming light. The Bible had said—and men after it—that the sins of the fathers should be visited on the children; but had any one ever said the children should not *overcome* those visitations?”

Her husband was smiling ironically. “The same old story,” he commented, throwing his cigarette stump into the fire and clasping his hands thoughtfully over his head.

“No; not *quite* the same old story. You see, she thought she could overcome her inheritance. It seemed unjust to her that she should be condemned—and her innocent child after her—because of something *intangible*. . . . She began to watch herself—to undo the curses of her parentage one by one, first in herself, then in her children—for another child was born to her. She had always been impatient, impetuous, and passionate. She became very still and gentle and patient. . . . She never allowed herself to be irritable over trifles as other people were. She *dared* not. She had been jealous, exacting. She taught herself to be generous and indulgent. It wasn’t easy—it was hard. It took years of labor, but she was willing to labor—she was pay-

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ing him back in happiness for the theft of his name. . . .

"And after a while people came to her for peace. She was so still they said her hands and voice eased pain. She seemed to be able to make people *happy*. They—they called her a very good woman. That child who had begun life playing in her mother's blood had become, because of that very inheritance, what we call a good woman."

Her husband shook his head, unconvinced.

"Where did you hear this story?" he demanded.

"It doesn't matter." She pushed his question away. "Nothing matters except that that woman *was* conquering . . . coming out, as it seemed, into smooth waters. He had succeeded in his profession; they had lovely things around them; their children were a joy and a blessing. She felt safe, even though that man, her father, was lying in prison. She felt safe. And then one day she picked up a paper and *saw*—one day she picked up a paper and saw that, after reprieving him for twenty-four years—they had just forgotten him. The sheriff and all the officials had just forgotten him."

"Forgotten him?"

"Forgotten the day of execution. He was not reprieved, and when they took the case to court they found that he was neither dead nor alive. The day of execution had passed. He was hanged under the law, but alive. . . ."

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"By Jove!" Hé arose to his feet.

"Yes—you see how far-reaching it was! They had no right to even keep him in prison. He was old and incompetent. His care devolved on the state. . . . And then the papers took it up because of the sensational aspect of the case, and began looking for the child!"

"Who told you this story?" Her husband had come toward her. He was frowning, but she sat there by the fireplace, still and stolid like a prisoner at the bar.

"You see," she said, looking up at him and ignoring his question, "she was trapped. She needn't have struggled, she needn't have worked, she needn't have *lied*. It was all coming out. Her father was old and incompetent and they were looking for her—they were looking for her. Don't you see? They were going to pry into her beautiful home and drag her out. . . ."

"How did you know this story? Answer me!" He was bending over her, his face startled into apprehension.

Then she lifted her eyes. "I know it—because—"

"Well?" He reached down and laid his hand heavily on her shoulder, and she found her voice.

"I am the woman," she said. And then she thought she screamed it out, over and over again, "I am the woman!" But her habit of physical repression must have prevented her from making a sound, for she saw no understanding in his face.

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Then she heard herself repeating the words over again, very carefully, watching his face as a mother watches the face of a sick child. "I am the woman! I haven't any mother at all. . . . My mother was murdered. . . . My father killed her. . . . He is free and they are looking for me. . . . He is free and they are looking for me! We thought it was hidden, but you see it all came out—it came out."

Then she knew that he understood. And she looked at him as one looks who, through some accident, has destroyed a rare and precious treasure. She felt as a surgeon must feel who has cut into flesh without being able to give an anesthetic.

She heard him asking incredulous, dazed questions; heard herself making answers. Over and over she heard him ask and heard herself answer. And then at last she saw him go over to the sofa. He sat stock-still, his hands falling between his knees. And she watched him. She had no words—she just sat and watched him suffer.

After a while he asked, stolidly, "Why have you told me *now*?"

It was characteristic of the closeness of their intercourse that the tragedy of it all, for him as for her, lay not in the hideous facts of the revelation she had made, but in their mental aloofness—that he was groping in a strange mind when he was speaking to her now; that they had lived side by side, breath against breath, heart beating against heart—and thought apart! The passion

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that was rising in him toward its climax was not that birth had unfitted her to be his wife, but that spiritually she had never been wholly his.

But she was beginning all over again, explaining and re-explaining. "Don't you understand? Don't you *see*? It is all going to be in the papers. It *is* in the papers. I couldn't let you see it there. . . . She wrote me to tell you. Oh, *try* to understand what it means—exposure, disgrace; you and the children pointed at—pitied. And no one can do anything. He is there waiting for me—my father! Don't you understand? *He* is alive and free! Don't you understand I had to tell you? He is alive and free and they are looking for me!"

Then he stared in her face—stared long, as one stares who is trying to focus thought. Then he spoke.

"He is *dead*," he said.

She looked at him with uncomprehending eyes.

"I didn't understand at first what you were saying, it all came so fast. The man is dead, if you are talking about that case in Kentucky. It's in the evening paper. I read it in the car coming up. I couldn't take in what you were saying at first, but—there'll be no exposure; it's a small notice."

"Dead!" She felt for the word as a blind person feels for some guiding object.

"He died on the way to the almshouse."

She saw him looking around for something and

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she pointed to the sofa, and watched him, fascinated, while he found the paper he had brought; fascinated, but without any realization of the ultimate meaning of what he was doing.

He brought the paper over and laid it in her lap, pointing with his finger.

"There it is: 'On His Way to the Almshouse.' . . . They don't mention—you. They don't have to find the child—now. Your father is dead!"

Then she looked down and saw some letters that all seemed to run into one word. She didn't know how long she sat there trying to put them together. But at last she found, with a great effort, that she could make out a sentence. She read it over and over. She felt she must read it many, many times to understand. "Having no relatives, he is to be buried at the expense of the state." Having no relatives. . . . There was something else farther down that seemed to mean something, too. "He missed the almshouse only to find his last resting-place in the—potter's field." . . . And farther down still: "This man, who was neither dead nor alive, will be remembered as the one who murdered—" And at last: "The child has never been located."

The paper slipped from her hands to the floor. She raised her dazed eyes to her husband's face.

"If the paper had come early I would have seen it first." Her voice was stunned.

"Yes."

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"And you would never have known?"

"No."

"But I was—just *afraid*, and so—I told?"

"Yes."

"There wasn't any reason for it?"

"No."

"It's odd, isn't it?"

Then she sat quite still. There would be no exposure. His name was safe—his children's future would be untarnished; but everything was over for her. He *knew*, and he need not have known. Her own fear had destroyed her, and all the time there had been nothing to be afraid of. He would never trust her again. He would *fear*, too, now that there was nothing to fear—now that at last he knew the whole naked reaches of her thought. She could have laughed at the relentless tragedy of it all. She looked at the clock on the mantelshelf and saw that it pointed to half-past eight. Ten minutes ago he had not known!

He was standing by the mantel, looking down into the fire, his face set, his jaws locked. It seemed as if she was looking at some quiet stranger. She would never know his thoughts, now. He was afraid of her—afraid of his wife! Afraid of the inheritance she would give his children.

The silence was becoming crueler than any words could have been. She had looked at him, but he seemed unconscious alike of her gaze or her presence.

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"Won't — you say — *something* — to me—please?"

Then the man turned. "Stand up," he said.

She stood up.

"Come here."

She went over to him, dragging her white draperies, but with her head no longer held high. It had fallen to her bosom.

He put his hands on either side of her face and lifted it to his. Then she saw with frightened pain in her eyes that he looked quite old. The youth had been wiped away from his face.

Tears began to run down her cheeks, from her open eyes, that were fixed on his. They ran down her cheeks until they fell on the white stuff of her gown.

The man groaned. "You poor woman!" he said. "You—*poor* woman. . . ."

Then suddenly she saw far beyond his eyes into his mind. She trembled. His eyes were prophetic.

"You couldn't use it *alone*; but there is a remedy."

"A remedy." She stared at him uncomprehendingly.

"Don't you understand . . . ?"

She smiled. "You think—if you put *me* out of the way—it would—help?"

"That isn't the end of fear. I know it now. It is the *beginning*." He groaned as one groans who is passing through some great spiritual

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travail, and as he groaned it was given to him to *see*.

This woman whom he called his wife was but the type of countless other women, buried in the centuries, whose problem was netted to hers even as link is clasped in link in a metal purse. And even as those women had crept to a man's side with their primal inheritance, too weak to undo it quite alone, even so she was standing at his side now, holding up mutely the manacles of her fear for him to break off her wrists. Those men before him had not broken the chains of bondage with their strength—they had taken the yoke from the weaker woman and passed it down from generation to generation. Even as the first man had eaten the first fear, in the Garden, so had they continued eating of it, because they had not been able to make perfect that one word she had cried aloud.

Then this individual man, who was facing the age-long problem, dropped his hands from the woman's face and turned away, too.

She stood there straight and tall where he had left her, neither putting out hand nor raising voice. "You are going. . . . ?"

Then he turned back to her, and his face wore the half-shamed, half-wondering expression of one who has touched with fleshly hands an incredible and incommunicable emotion.

"I am going," he said, "to catch the nine-fifty from the Grand Central. . . ." As she swayed,

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he caught her; and, faint with a sublime and inexperienced sense of nearness, she felt him bend her head back in the old way, and opening her eyes she looked straight into his eyes. They were quite fearless and ineffably tender. "I am going to catch the nine-fifty from the Grand Central," he repeated, slowly. "I am going to Kentucky, to bring *our* father's body—*home!*"

